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**NOT UNDERSTOOD.**

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# NOT UNDERSTOOD

BY

A. MELVILLE HAYMAN.



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DEDICATED  
TO MY BELOVED WIFE

*Without whose good influence and valuable  
assistance I should never have been  
able to write this book.*

A. MELVILLE HAYMAN.

*25th December 1915.*



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# NOT UNDERSTOOD.

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## CHAPTER I.

### **Early Life.**

Malcolm Wensley belonged to the Middle class. He called himself a Eurasian, a name which at one time embraced all who were of mixed European and Asiatic descent, but which now-a-days is looked down upon and is held to include only such of those of the mixed descent who unfortunately are decidedly dark coloured or whose occupation is insignificant, and the whole mass of Native Christians whose names undergo distinct changes with each generation. As an example of the latter, the case of Dorai-sawmy Pillay may be cited. When Dorai-sawmy Pillay was admitted at the age of fifty four, just about the time when men in government service are applying for extensions, to the christian religion, he was baptised as George William Henry Dorai. His children, not enamoured with the oriental ending, and wishing to pass themselves off as Eurasians, looked about and soon found that with a very small change their name could be converted into an English one. Hence they adopted the name of Doran.

But Malcolm Wensley was in reality a Eurasian. On his father's side he was able to trace his ancestry back to one of the noble English generals who had fought and won India for the Crown, and his mother was a pure European. He had English blood running in his veins and was very proud of the fact.

Malcolm's father was a clerk in the Presidency Port officer's office in Bombay. He was in receipt of the miserable salary of eighty rupees a month. He had previously occupied a better position as a store-keeper, but being held responsible for the loss of certain costly material he was degraded and transferred to the office.

Mr. Wensley had four children, the eldest Beatrice, the second another girl, Eileen, and the twin boys Malcolm and Charles. Beatrice was five and Eileen three years older than the brothers. All the children except Malcolm were fair like the mother.

When Malcolm and Charles were barely a year old a distressing calamity occurred. It all arose over a misunderstanding and Mrs. Wensley was as innocent as a new born babe of the charge made against her. But circumstantial evidence and lying tongues enabled Mr. Wensley to obtain a divorce from his wife. He had always been very proud of her and had up to the time that mischievous and deliberately false reports were anonymously made to him, full confidence in the uprightness of her charac-

ter. After the order of divorce was passed she disappeared from Bombay and was never heard of subsequently. In the course of time, as is natural in such cases, she was presumed to be dead.

Mr. Wensley did not attach much importance to the education of girls. He was of opinion that it was sufficient for a girl to know how to read and write and attend to domestic duties; but he knew the value of education for boys and was determined to do his best for the twins. He soon realised, however, that it was impossible for him on his slender income to send both Malcolm and Charles to a good school. He could only afford to pay the fees for one. No one knew why he gave Charles the preference in this matter. It was not a question of birthright because Malcolm was the older of the two by fully half an hour. The question was not one that concerned others or it would most certainly have been suggested that he did so because he concluded that the fairer child should get the better education as his chances of success in the world would be less hampered. A good education might be wasted on Malcolm.

And so it happened that at the age of eight Charles was admitted as a scholar in one of the best European Schools and Malcolm was sent to a Middle Poor School of very doubtful reputation, where the only recommendations were that the fee from the lowest to the highest class

was eight annas a month and the children were given a midday meal. Malcolm continued in this school until he was thirteen. Here, he was taught nothing else but English and Arithmetic. The large amount of attention devoted to these subjects made him pretty strong in them. About the time he left this School, the Principal of the institution in which Charles was being educated threw open a Scholarship available from the Middle to the High School to any nominated (European) candidate below the age of fifteen who secured the top place at a competitive examination in Arithmetic and English Grammar and Composition. Malcolm who had obtained a nomination by applying for it himself secured the first place.

Soon after his wife had left him Mr. Wensley had found that he could not fully meet all the expenses of the management of the house, and it was a wonder to him how she had kept within his income. With a view to avoid getting into debt, retrenchments had to be effected in every direction, but, even with the greatest care and strictest privations, Mr. Wensley had off and on to go to the money lenders. There was never a pice left to provide clothing for the children, and at the end of two years Malcolm had only one suit on his back. The maid servant who did all the work of the house was not slow to take advantage of the want of supervision over her and of Mr. Wensley's ignorance of the price of food stuffs. She provided them with food

worth about twelve annas although Mr. Wensley allowed her twice that amount daily.

Mr. Wensley watched the boys with admiration. That in spite of all their disadvantages they were able to attend to their studies, do well in their examinations, and hold their own in manly sports was a source of great self satisfaction and pride to him.

Malcolm's results at school were much better than his brothers. This was a matter of surprise to their father who scarcely ever saw Malcolm study. The lad was full of play and was out all morning and evening and a good part of the night indulging in a game of marbles, flying kites or killing birds. The latter was a common form of after dinner amusement among the poorer children of the middle class in Bombay. Armed with catapults a batch of boys would on almost every moonlight night spend hours together at this sport in neighbour topos and find as much delight in it as well-to-do gentleman do in big game shooting. And the sport was a lucrative one as the coolies readily bought the dead birds.

But although Malcolm often got back to his room at night by scaling the street wall, (as all the others had retired he did not wish to disturb them), he never went to bed without preparing his lessons. Reclining on his bed, he would spend an hour or two learning by the dim light of the stump of a candle

which, as a regular habit, he carried in his coat pocket.

Mr. Wensley was not in a position to provide the boys with good boots or the necessary gear to enable them to take part in such outdoor games as cricket, tennis and football, but Charles earned the money required for the purpose by working half an hour every morning in attending to the correspondence of a private Oilmans Store, by singing in the choir and by serenading and carol singing on festive occasions. The boys also received a share of the money realised by the sale of the dead birds.

Malcolm was a favourite at school. He was very big for his age and full of pluck and grit. Without exception he was the best all round athlete in the school department. He played cricket, foot-ball, hockey and tennis; all in first class form. He belonged to the boxing class and there were very few of his size and weight who could be persuaded to put on the gloves with him. He was liked by the masters for his cheery disposition, his truthfulness and straightforwardness, but he was always ready for mischief and this often got him into trouble. Indeed on one occasion he was nearly expelled from the school.

One of the masters, Mr. Napier, a young good looking graduate of the herculean type, who had come out from England was, in the words of the boys, "putting on a lot of side

and trying to do the swank." He would walk into the classes stiff and erect, with his head thrown back and with the ghost of a supercilious smile on his brow. Outside school he would adopt the same attitude making it impossible for any of the students to wish him the time. Some who did so on the first and second occasions they met him soon gave it up as he passed by without noticing them. Unlike the other masters he was never to be seen on the playground or in the auditorium on the occasions of the weekly concerts. The boys had taken a positive dislike to him and the other masters, including the Principal, who was sorely disappointed in his behaviour, treated him contemptuously, as he deserved to be. But the boys were not as patient as the masters. A council of war was held in the gymnasium and proposals to bring the swank to his senses were invited for consideration. Malcolm suggested that the *bounder* was suffering from a swollen head. "Pride must have a fall," he remarked. Henricus North the biggest boy in the school roared with applause. "That's the ticket." "That's the ticket," he cried. "Leave the rest to me. I will arrange that Great will be the fall." That very evening North assisted by a few others spent the best part of a dozen candles on the floor of the passage leading to the Sixth Standard. This was the class under Mr. Napier. The next morning, when the whole school was assembled in the main hall and



the Principal was about to commence the morning prayers, there was a stampede and a dash for the Sixth Standard to see what had occasioned a terrific crash that had vibrated throughout the whole building. Napier lay on the floor his head bleeding and his chin out. When he was assisted to his feet by none others than Henricus North and Malcolm Wensley he was about to stammer his thanks when the whole three of them losing their balance fell on the floor, all in a heap. To his misfortune Mr. Napier was sandwiched between the floor and Henricus North. The Principal who had by this time arrived at the scene suspected foul play and ordering the boys back to the hall shouted, "Wensley what is the matter with the floor. Examine it."

"There's no need to examine it, Sir. Somebody has waxed the floor."

"Disgraceful. Disgraceful," said the Principal, "the whole school will be kept in for one hour every day for a month unless the culprits confess their guilt."

Malcolm and North helped Mr. Napier into his class and put him into his chair. They were followed closely by the Principal and the other masters.

The two boys were leaving the class when the Principal called them back.

"Who has been scribbling on that black board," he enquired.

North looked on the floor. Malcolm looked at the Board. He was thunderstruck, for there in a bold familiar hand were written the words, "Pride must have a fall." The situation was so amusing that he laughed.

"You seem to know something about this disgraceful business, Wensley. Whose hand-writing is that."

Malcolm remained silent.

"Answer me," roared the Principal.

Malcolm knew from the tone of his voice that he was more amused than angry. He therefore still remained silent.

"That looks like the hand-writing of Harold Clark, Mr. Duart," suggested one of the junior masters.

"Send for him at once," ordered the Principal.

When Clark was led into the room he was trembling like a leaf and his face was as pale as death. He was a big boy but a great coward. He was neurasthenic.

"Did you write that," demanded the Principal, pointing to the black board.

"No-o Sar."

"Dont tell me a lie. I see guilt in your face. Go to the hall, I shall cane you in the presence of the whole School."

Clark slunk away sobbing.

Malcolm stepped up to the Principal. There was not an atom of fear in him. "If you please, Sir, I am responsible for the writing on that board as well as for waxing the floor. May I explain, Sir."

"Disgraceful. Disgraceful. What explanation can you possibly have."

"All of us, Sir, felt Mr. Napier's treatment very much, especially his refusal to return our wishes. We had a meeting and I suggested that, '*Pride must have a fall*' and this is the result, Sir. I'm very sorry, Sir, but something had to be done."

"Disgraceful. Disgraceful," murmured the Principal, but he feared at the moment to say anything more. It was with the greatest difficulty that he controled himself. He was a big rotund man and it was plain, and plainest most to Mr. Napier, that his sides, were splitting with laughter.

After morning prayers the Principal ordered the boys to remain back. He then called for Wensley. Malcolm marched up to the Principal. He was neither afraid of the impending punishment nor ashamed of his conduct.

"Malcolm Wensley," said the Principal, "your behaviour, in waxing the floor and writing on the black board, both being directed to hurt the feelings of a master of the school, is subversive of discipline. I consider it a very serious offence. If it had not been that your

conduct in the past has been uniformly good I should have withdrawn your scholarship. But I cannot pass such behaviour over without punishment. You must be caned in the presence of the whole school.

Malcolm received twelve cuts. He bore them unflinchingly much to the delight of his many admirers. Some of the boys, however, made the rude remark that the Principal did not beat him half as hard as he had beaten others, and this was true not because, as the boys remarked, he was afraid that Malcolm would make him fall next, but because his heart was not in it.

The next morning the peon of the school brought Malcolm a parcel. It contained a pair of foot-ball boots, a pair of fancy knickers, a cricket bat and a card on which was written, "From the Masters." In after years Malcolm came to know that it was the Principal who suggested the present and had contributed the largest share towards its cost.

When in the usual course both Charles and Malcolm passed the High School examination, Mr. Wensley was delighted at the prospect of their securing lucrative appointments and of soon being in a position to give him substantial financial assistance.

Like most poorer parents of the middle class in Bombay, Mr. Wensley believed that there was no better employment in the world than service under Government, and as the starting pay in most government offices was

twenty rupees a month, whereas the Government Telegraph and Subordinate Military Medical Service started lads on thirty-seven rupees eight annas a month, it was the ambition of all parents of the class to which Mr. Wensley belonged to get their boys into one or other of these departments. When the results of the High School examination were known, Mr. Wensley called the boys to him and told them that he had very carefully considered what situations in life they would be best suited for, and had decided that Charles should enter the Medical Service and Malcolm the Telegraph Department. Always docile and obedient, Charles replied that he would do anything that was required of him by his father. He appeared at the next competitive examination which was held a month later and having secured a sufficiently high place was required to join the College almost immediately. But young Malcolm surprised his father when he replied "Father I have for the last three months been carefully considering what I should do in case I passed my examination. Although I shall never be discontented in life and will be happy even if I end my days on fifty rupees a month, I do not like to enter either the Telegraph or the Medical Department. The latter service is too slow. After working twenty years I'll get only two hundred rupees pay. In the Telegraph Department one never gets anything at all. I'd like to enter some private business, not Government.

Service, where I shall either get on or not get on. I must either rise to a good salary while I am yet young or I must end my days, as you have, in poverty. It is a gamble father, but I am prepared to try it. I do wish you won't insist on my entering the Telegraph or Medical. But there is time father, the next examination for admission into the Telegraph Training School is in December, ten months hence. Please allow me in the interval to look out for employment of the kind I refer to. I promise you that I shall keep up my studies so as to be prepared for the Telegraph examination in case you insist on my appearing."

Mr. Wensley, more from the desire of seeing the boy usefully employed for the greater part of the year than from any other motive, consented to the lad's request. He had resolved, however, to tell Malcolm two or three months before the examination that he must enter the Telegraph Department. He had confidence that even with a short period of preparation Malcolm would find no difficulty in securing a high place at the test.

From the very next day Malcolm went in search of employment. He had nothing to recommend him except that he had passed the High School examination and held a certificate of good character from the Principal of the school in which he was educated. His colour and his shabby clothes went against him, and in many establishments he was rudely told.

"There is nothing for fellows like you here, so be off." He had never dreamt how difficult it was for one placed as he was to obtain a situation. For fully three months he spent the best part of the day tramping from one office to another but no one seemed to want him. He carried his tiffin in his pocket and munched it as he walked along the streets. The cruel heat of the hot summer days forced him time after time to drink water from the street taps. Only a coloured Eurasian situated as he was, could realize all that he was going through. Only then did he fully realize how strong the prejudice against the Eurasian was. What he sometimes felt very much, although he never envied their good fortune, was the ease with which some of the other young lads who had been in school with him, but who had not done as well as he, obtained fairly good starting appointments. He was not slow to see the reasons for their success. Either they were fairer and better looking than he or they had influential relatives or friends. But Malcolm was not one to give in and on more than one occasion he told his father, "Daddy I must succeed. Some of the gentlemen are beginning to treat me better. They look at me now when they see me hanging about."

At length fortune favoured him. It was the third time he had sent in his name to the Head of the European Warehouse. He was admitted into the presence of the Chief and the irate gentleman shouted at him, "I thought I told

you the last time you came here that I had no time to waste in seeing boys like you. Didn't you see the Board up outside saying there were no vacancies."

"Sir," replied Malcolm, "you speak as if you are very angry, but the fact that you have been so kind as to allow me to see you in spite of having told me not to come again makes me hope that you are not really angry and that you have a desire to give me a chance. I saw the notice, Sir, but I paid no attention to it. Only a week ago a friend of mine told me that these notices mean, "No Eurasians need apply," so I don't know what to believe, Sir. I have been knocking about every day for three months, on the look out for something to do and until I succeed in getting employment I shall come here at least once a month and send my name in to you to let you know I am still among the unemployed. At times I feel desperate, Sir, to think that no one wants me. Can't you give me a footing, please do. I don't ask for any pay until you are satisfied I am worth it. I am determined to get on, Sir. Please help me."

When Malcolm stopped speaking he knew he had made a favourable impression. "Very well. Very well," said the Chief, "I'll see what you can do. Take this slip to Mr. Turner, the Manager. You will be an unpaid apprentice for a month. Take care you do your best and do try to come to work a little more decently dressed."



"Thank you, Sir," said Malcolm, and he hurried away in search of the Manager.

Malcolm was always the first to come to work and the last to leave the shop. He had a wonderful capacity for work. He was employed during the probationary period in the Copying Branch of the firm. His outturn was twice as much as any of the other clerks and always of good quality. The Manager took a liking to him and at the end of his apprenticeship recommended him for permanent employment on twenty rupees a month. It was a great day for Malcolm when he was put on pay. "You see father," he said when he got home that night, "I have been given twenty rupees a month instead of ten, which is the commencing salary in the firm, because although I am not even quite as clever as some of the other clerks I always do more than twice as much as any of them. It's application and perseverance that counts father, and I am determined to know everything that there is to know about the work of the firm so that I will some day at least be fitted to be the Manager. But I won't build up too much hopes, father, as I know that my colour will go against me. I can see all around me in the firm the difference in treatment that is shown to the white and to the coloured man. But let us see if usefulness won't tell."

Mr. Wensley only smiled. He was still determined to make the boy enter the Telegraph Department, but as there were yet six

months before the examination he did not wish to turn Malcolm's interests away from his work. His salary would come in very handy and honest and hard work would certainly do him no harm.

At the end of three months, which was just about the time that Mr. Wensley was about to tell Malcolm that he must begin to prepare for the entrance examination to the Telegraph, Malcolm was specially selected for appointment as a Ledger Keeper and was promoted permanently to fifty rupees a month. Delighted at the quick promotion the boy had received and in the hope that his future advancement would be equally rapid, Mr. Wensley acceded to Malcolm's request to permit him to remain on in the Warehouse.

The Wensleys lived in a lane off Colaba Road. Malcolm was as much a favourite both among the young men and young ladies of the place as he had been at school. It would be more correct to refer to them as the lads and young girls as they were more or less of Malcolm's age, that is between sixteen and seventeen. Most of the other boys had each of them a particular favourite among the girls, call it what you like, a chum or a sweetheart, but Malcolm had up to then made no particular favourite. Of course he liked some of the girls, better than others but the idea of making love to any of them had never entered his head. He was known among the girls as *Robber-Malcolm* because

he was so mischievous that he stole kisses from them whenever he had an opportunity. Most of the girls liked him specially for this and of course Malcolm had enough sense to know whom to kiss and whom not to kiss. Once or twice he did get into trouble but on the whole he fared very well.

With both Charles and Malcolm earning, the Wensley's were now comparatively well off, and Mr. Wensley was looking forward to many years of contentment and sufficiency with his boys when he received a rude shock. He had time after time spoken to Charles and Malcolm on the subject of marriage and had impressed upon them that it was suicidal for any young man to get married before he was thirty years of age and before he was earning at least a hundred rupees. "All wives cease to love their husbands in times of want and adversity," he would say, "and if there is no love between a husband and wife their existence must be a cat and dog one." Believing Malcolm to be the more sensible and practical of the two boys, Mr. Wensley had little fear that he would fall a victim to the charms of the fair sex and he was therefore, as stated previously, taken completely by surprise when one morning Malcolm approached him and said, "Father, I wish to be engaged to Miss Hilda Chapman."

"Have you taken leave of your senses boy," thundered Mr. Wensley, "You are not

yet seventeen years of age and you are thinking of getting married. I am sorry I did not make you enter the Medical Department like Charles. You should have at least been safe for the four years you had to attend College. Your conduct in falling in love is disgraceful, and to speak of marrying when you are only seventeen and to that chit of a girl really makes me fear you have gone mad."

"I didn't speak of getting married, Father, I only asked your permission."

"Get out of this unless you wish to be beaten," shouted Mr. Wensley. "I'm afraid you need to have a little bit of sense knocked into you, and you are not too old to have it knocked in."

Malcolm withdrew from his father's presence, but that same day he wrote to him a letter from office in which he pleaded for permission to be engaged to Hilda, assuring his father at the same time that there would be no talk of marriage until he had closed his twenty fifth year. "I am not built like most of the other boys father," Malcolm wrote, "I love Hilda and she loves me and we have already pledged ourselves to marry one another and nothing will ever alter us. Getting engaged is only a formal matter so why should you object, dear father. Even if you thrashed me for a whole week you would not knock out of me my love for Hilda. Some day when I am better off and older I am going to get

married and I am going to get married to Hilda. It is because I wish to prove to Mrs. Chapman that my intentions are honourable that I wish to get engaged. Please be lenient and considerate with me and agree, father."

Hilda Chapman was a clever girl for her years. Though not yet sixteen she had passed the Matriculation examination and was studying at College. She was known among the boys as the *blue stocking*, and the *precocious youth*. A tall well-built girl, with a pretty face, a cheerful disposition and winsome manners, she had everything to recommend her except that she was very dark. Her parents were poor and she was one of a large family. Mr. Wensley was not one who attached any importance to colour. Character was everything with him, especially in a woman. He had seen a great deal of Hilda Chapman and had a high opinion of her.

He thought Malcolm's letter a very manly one. Both his girls had been married but he practically had to ask the young men, who were hanging about what their intentions were. Otherwise it was just possible that the girls would yet have been on his hands.

Mr. Wensley told Malcolm the same night that he might get engaged on the condition stated regarding marriage.

Like most mothers, Mrs. Chapman was very strict with her daughter and except in the hall of the Chapman's house Malcolm seldom had an

opportunity of being alone with Hilda. But the minds of lovers are always inventive, and so it happened that she deceived her mother into the belief that she attended Mass every week day, whereas, as a matter of fact she met Malcolm in the Park three mornings out of the six. This continued for fully a year. Malcolm never neglected his work because he was in love; on the contrary the desire to advance himself by becoming more useful was keener now that he wished at the end of a few years to get married. He was supremely happy, but it was not long before something occurred to mar his happiness. Latterly he noticed that every time he went over to see Hilda, she was in the company of a young man named Christensen and it pricked him to the quick to observe that she was unduly vivacious and high spirited whenever Christensen was present. Malcolm had no desire to hurt Hilda's feelings so he refrained from speaking to her about the matter, but when one day he surprised them in the act of holding one another's hands it was more than he was able to stand. No sooner Christensen left he addressed Hilda.

"I was very hurt Hilda to find you flirting with that fellow. You know that he is a good-for-nothing and you must not forget that you are an engaged woman."

"Oh Malcolm how silly you are darling. Can you imagine anything more absurd than my being in love with that little boy. I play

with him because he is only a child. I have very little pleasures but if you wish it I'll break friends with him. I love only you Malcolm. What makes you doubt it. Did I appear guilty when you entered. And yet you are so rude as to accuse me of flirting," and she burst into tears.

Seeing her cry Malcolm was moved to compassion. He forgot that Christensen was only a year his junior.

"Forgive me Hilda," he said, "what a beast I am. Say that you forgive me."

She signified her forgiveness by saying, "Kiss me Malcolm and forget all about this little unpleasantness."

Malcolm hoped that having spoken out Hilda would be less free with Christensen, but in this he was sorely disappointed. Their intimacy seemed to increase daily. It was not unnatural therefore that Malcolm felt more and more uneasy about Hilda. But he held his tongue and hid his feelings. He, however, kept his eyes and ears wide open.

A month later Hilda was invited to spend a few weeks with a cousin of hers, Mrs. Gregory, at Mahableshtar. She protested much against going, but on Malcolm's earnest pleading that the change would do her immense good she finally consented, and then only on his promising to run up for a few days to see her. She undertook to get Mrs. Gregory to invite him.

The night after Hilda left, Malcolm went out for a long walk. On his way home he noticed, after taking a turning into one of the bye lanes, that he was only a few yards behind three men, one of whom was Christensen. He had no intention of playing the part of an eavesdropper but when he gathered from some of the remarks that reached his ears that his sweetheart was being freely discussed, he succumbed to the temptation. He took care that the distance between him and the others was sufficiently near to enable him to follow tolerably well all that was said but not near enough to attract the suspicion of the others that anyone was within ear shot.

He heard a great deal about Hilda and all that was supposed to have taken place during the last few months, but what troubled him most was Christensen's proud boast that he was making the best of his chances and that he could do anything with Hilda as she was such a brick.

"But don't you love her or care for her at least in a sort of way of your own," enquired one of his companions.

"Do you take me for a fool like Wensley, breaking his heart over her while I actually have more fun than him: I don't believe he's put his arm round her waist, while I," and he laughed, "even if he marries the girl, I'm confident she'll make love to me. It's the same way with all the girls about here and about



everywhere. There's only one thing you must never do, everything else you can. Never write to them. Writing letters lands one into difficulties.

Malcolm felt like rushing at Christensen and knocking his words down his throat but with a supreme effort he controlled himself. "I must be patient," he said, "but I will be even with him yet." A little lower down the road Christensen dropped out of the party and entered a house. No sooner he had left, one of the others a young man who was staying in the same house as he, said, "I've got a nice little scheme in view. I'll write to Hilda Chapman and sign Christensen's name. I'll write two love letters, one tomorrow and one a few days later and I'll look out for the replies and when they come I'll post them to Wensley. Girls like Hilda Chapman deserve to be caught.

The next two days were miserable ones for Malcolm. He could not sleep, he felt choked if he attempted to put a morsel of food in his mouth and for the first time in his career he was reminded by the Manager that there were gentlemen who were waiting for their bills.

When three days later having received and accepted an invitation from Mrs. Gregory he asked the Manager for a week's leave it was gladly given to him as the Manager said he had noticed that Malcolm was not the same man during the last week or so and that there was no doubt he needed a short holiday.

"And if you are not feeling quite fit at the end of the week keep away for another week, a fortnight at Mahableshtar will pull you sufficiently together for another two years good work, but when you come back you must not work as hard as you have been doing, lad."

Hilda and Mrs. Gregory met him at the station and drove him home. Mrs. Gregory was very well off and Malcolm was exceedingly thankful for the very elaborate arrangements that had been made for his comfort. The first opportunity that he and Hilda had of being together alone they fell to exchanging confidences. Among other things Hilda volunteered the statement. "You know Malcolm I tell you everything in my life, I can never keep anything from you."

Malcolm had expected her to tell him of the letter she had received from Christensen but as she didn't, this statement of hers made him doubt whether the first letter had not gone astray or had not been posted after all. Knowing that he would have the means of seeing whether the second letter came in he ceased to trouble about the matter. He slept well and was quite happy and cheerful when early the next morning he went out for a walk with Hilda. After breakfast he excused himself on the plea of having some correspondence to attend to. He wrote a couple of letters and went himself to the post office to post them.

On the way there he met the postman. He asked the man if there was a letter for him, telling him that he stayed with Mrs. Gregory. He watched the post man examining his packet and noticed among in it a letter to Hilda in a gentleman's hand writing. He inferred at once that this was the second letter purporting to come from Christensen.

When later in the day, shortly after lunch, he was alone with Hilda, he expected her to show him *Christensen's* letter, but although an hour passed, she made no mention of it.

Just before they parted that night Malcolm spoke to her of the absolute necessity and great value of mutual confidence and complete understanding between them. "Many lives," he said, "have been spoilt by misunderstandings that have arisen owing to want of complete confidence."

"There is no subject," said Hilda, "in which I more heartily agree with you Malcolm. It is impossible, yes absolutely impossible, for love to exist unless there is implicit and full confidence. I have already once told you that I tell you everything in my life. Now, kiss me once more and hurry away to bed, it's already very late."

As may be imagined Malcolm was too troubled in mind to sleep. He walked up and down his room for hours. His great difficulty was to reconcile Hilda's behaviour.

Soon after breakfast the next day he found himself alone with Hilda. Mrs. Gregory had gone out for a drive and very considerably had not asked either of them to accompany her.

"You are very silent and thoughtful this morning Malcolm," said Hilda, "are you ill."

"No Hilda, I am not ill; but never mind, never mind I must not trouble you."

"Not at all, Malcolm, you must tell me what is troubling you. Remember you promised that there were to be no secrets between us."

This gave Malcolm the opening he was waiting for.

"Hilda," he said, "are you sure you have no secrets from me."

"None whatever," she replied. "Why Malcolm what makes you ask such a question, and in so serious a manner, one would think from your face that you believed it of me."

This attitude of hers made him again hesitate, but he soon recovered from his indecision and spoke out.

"You have been in correspondence with Christensen, Hilda."

"Whoever put such an idea into your head Malcolm," she retorted. "I have never written a line to that boy."

"That may be quite true Hilda but has he ever written to you." He watched her carefully as he asked this question.

She winced, grew a trifle pale, but answered in quite her usual confident way. "I am sure Malcolm it is time you saw a doctor."

"I beg that you will give me a definite reply, Hilda."

"I am sure my reply is as definite as it could be."

"It is quite probable I shall have to take your advice Hilda, as I shall soon be suffering from a broken heart. Will it interest you to know that I saw a letter for you in the post-man's hands this morning on my way to the post office and that it was in the handwriting of that accursed youngster Christensen. A low cad who says he's only fooling you."

"Did he say that to you Malcolm."

"I am afraid, Hilda, I cannot satisfy your curiosity on that point. Am I to understand that everything is over between us."

For answer she threw herself on him and cried bitterly. "It is true I received two letters from him but how could I have told you. I wanted so often to do so, but I hadn't the courage, I thought you would be angry with me. Say that you forgive me, my love. Say so quickly or you'll kill me."

Men are ever moved by tears and Malcolm loved the girl intensely.

"There is nothing to forgive Hilda," he said, "I was a beast not to understand your position. It is for you to forgive me."

She wiped away her tears and became cheerful.

The remaining days spent at Mahableshwar were red letter days to Malcolm. He felt that he had never been happier in all his life. Hilda had of her own accord told him that she would never speak to Christensen again. This, once and for all, set his mind at ease.

Nothing of importance occurred during the next six months. He saw Hilda every day and he felt that her love for him was growing deeper and deeper. At the end of that time he was promoted to sixty rupees a month and transferred to Poona. His parting with Hilda was extremely painful. She swore that she would fret to death at the separation and implored him to marry her at once and take her away. The day after he arrived in Poona he received a frantic letter from her. She declared that it was quite impossible for her to live without him and begged of him to promise to come down within a month and marry her. She vowed that if he failed her, she would positively go mad. Malcolm was considerably perplexed as to the nature of the reply he should make. He felt convinced of the utter recklessness of marrying unless his position was improved, but he knew what it meant to refuse Hilda. He had not up to then ever refused her a single request. How was he going to do so now. After much consideration he decided to temporise. Perhaps

after all a few days might bring about a change in the position and reconcile her in a way to the separation. He therefore wrote to her saying that he could quite understand her feelings in the matter and that he had every desire to meet her wishes. He implored her however, in view of the seriousness of the step contemplated to give him a fortnight to consider how best to act. To this request, she assented.

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In the meantime he wrote to an elderly gentleman friend of his and Hilda's. He explained the position to his friend and asked him for his advice and help. Before the fortnight had elapsed his friend wrote to Malcolm saying that he had arranged with his father and Hilda's mother that they could be married at the end of a year. "Hilda knows about this," he wrote, "and is very pleased and happy.

Being thus freed from anxiety Malcolm devoted himself assiduously to his work. He was determined to get on. Indeed he hoped to obtain another promotion before he was married. Everything appeared to go alright for about four or five months after which he could not but fail to notice that a change had come over Hilda. Her letters were less frequent and they seemed to become more and more formal. But he made no complaint, notwithstanding he suffered bitterly. Shortly afterwards he was recalled to Bombay and

posted as Assistant Manager in one of the Departments on one hundred and fifty rupees a month. He telegraphed to his father and to Hilda informing them of his good fortune and he wrote to Hilda telling her how delighted he was at the prospect of making her his wife at a very early date.

He received no acknowledgment from Hilda although it was a week before he was able to leave Poona for Bombay, and he was painfully hurt when he arrived at Bombay and discovered that she was not among those who had come to the station to meet him. But as he loved her he naturally found excuses for her absence.

At noon the same day he called at Hilda's place but was told that she was out. The same fate awaited him when he called again in the evening. He was greatly distressed at this; surely she must have known that he would call. He racked his brains to ascertain the cause of her behaviour but failed to find a sufficient reason. At dinner he was unusually quiet and only answered in monosyllables to questions put to him.

Early next morning he dressed himself and went out for a walk. Quite unintentionally he found himself going in the direction of Hilda's house, and to his astonishment he saw Hilda ahead of him carrying her prayer book but going in an opposite direction to the chapel. His first impulse was to overtake her



but on second consideration he decided to turn back and take another road that led in the direction she was going so that he might meet her at the junction of the roads. When he met her his heart stood still for she was not now alone but with a young man of most disreputable character with whom she appeared to be on distinctly familiar terms. He raised his hat and passed them but neither returned the greeting. Hilda hung her head and her companion, Williamson by name, looked in the opposite direction.

Malcolm continued his walk for an hour or so and then went over to Hilda's place. Her mother met him at the door. "Come and sit down, Malcolm," she said. "It is exceedingly pleasing to see you. Tell me all about yourself. Hilda will be here presently. She has, as usual, gone to Mass."

The words, "as usual," grated on Malcolm's ears. "Was the meeting with Williamson this morning unusual and accidental," he asked himself.

"I am afraid there isn't very much to tell, Mrs. Chapman. The months in Poona I have spent in work and study and building castles of happiness about Hilda. How disappointed I feel that I have not yet been able to see her."

"Surely Malcolm you saw her at the station yesterday, she told me she was going to meet you."

"Perhaps she changed her mind and went to chapel instead," he remarked.

"No, no, Malcolm, she must have been late or have gone to the wrong platform. She'll be here presently and I'll ask her."

"Please don't, Mrs. Chapman. She will no doubt tell us of her own accord what happened. Hilda was always averse to being questioned."

The door opened and Hilda entered.

"You are very late dear said Mrs. Chapman. Malcolm is dying to see you. Sit down and talk to him while I get him a cup of tea."

"Please, Mamma, remain with him a little, I'll be back in a minute," and saying this she hurried away to her room without even approaching Malcolm to shake hands with him.

Mrs. Chapman and Malcolm resumed their seats and remained silent for close on five minutes. Mrs. Chapman was the first to speak. "If you will excuse me, Malcolm, I'll see what has happened to Hilda and send her to you."

"You are very kind," was all he was able to reply.

How long she was away he could not recall but it seemed an age to him and when she eventually returned he felt prepared for what she had to say.

"I am sorry Malcolm but Hilda seems to have left the house again. I fancy that after

Hilda was dreadful, but the possibility of her having fallen in love with Williamson was heart-rending. Everyone who knew anything about him, knew what a villain he was. How many girls' hearts he had broken and into how many happy homes he had brought about distrust between husband and wife, one could never calculate. He played an all-important part in a very disgraceful incident that happened in the neighbourhood.

"Hilda might give me up, but I will warn her for the sake of my love for her," he resolved.

He called at Hilda's place on the evening of the seventh day. She was alone at home and received him at once. As he approached her she stretched her hands out. 'No, Malcolm,' she said, "you must not kiss me. Sit down and I'll tell you why."

He obeyed her promptly.

"Malcolm, I know how it will hurt you, but I am sure, I am acting in your best interests when I tell you that I have definitely decided that our engagement must be broken off. It is best in your interests and mine. I cannot explain the reasons to you but, if we married, we shall never be happy."

"I have no doubt, Hilda, that you are speaking the truth, I wish you had been more explicit but that does not really matter. Rest assured that I have no intention of forcing

myself on you. I feel compelled, however, to warn you against your present lover. Don't think I am speaking in a jealous fit but everyone knows what he is. No doubt you do too. But these sort of men seem to have a special attraction for women. Be warned in time Hilda. He'll crush you to pieces like a faded flower and trample you in the dust himself."

"Don't speak of my friends in that fashion Malcolm. You are very mean and cruel. I wish you would never speak to me again."

"I shall respect your wishes, Hilda, but I warn you once more that you are in the hands of the very devil himself. Good bye."

In a little while Malcolm discovered that he was mistaken in his belief that Hilda cared for Williamson or even preferred his company to others. He never heard of their being seen together, nor did he himself ever see them together again. He had therefore to admit to himself that he had cruelly wronged her in accusing her of being in love with Williamson and that the day he saw them together was probably the only occasion on which she walked with him.

He often passed Hilda on the road and took off his hat to her. She returned his greeting, but quickly turned her head aside. Often he wished that she would appear a trifle less stiff and thus afford him an opportunity of

at least being a friend of hers, which relationship he hoped might in time bring them together again. But his hopes were all in vain.

To only one person did Hilda explain why she broke off her engagement with Malcolm. "You see," she remarked, "a friend of mine told me that Malcolm's brother Charles said that he did not understand what Malcolm saw in a dark girl like me, and that all the fairer girls of the place were ready to have him if only he held his finger up, but that was not all, my friend went so far as to say that she knew Malcolm's sisters very well and that they had remarked that even Malcolm would in time be quite ashamed of me because of my colour."

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## CHAPTER II.

### Malcolm gets Married.

Five years went by. During all this time Malcolm strenuously avoided the company of ladies. He felt as if he could never trust a woman again. He had almost completely lost faith in women and was on the verge of becoming a woman-hater. He lived a quiet and clean life. Part of his spare time he spent in studying Practical Printing and Advertising in order to become more useful to his employers and the remainder he devoted in being of service to others. There were very few who applied to Malcolm Wensley for help in vain. It was one of the dearest objects of his life to make sacrifices for others. He would never willingly stand by and see another in suffering or want without lending a helping hand. Those who knew him well always referred to him as the man who would take the last coat off his back to give it to another in need, but everything Malcolm did, he did in a most unostentatious way. He would never advertise himself or permit himself to be advertised. Indeed when on one occasion a friend of his whom he had helped said "Wensley, I'll tell every one I meet of your kindness." Malcolm replied, "if you do anything of the sort, please do not consider me your friend any longer."

Malcolm was especially fond of children and the little ones, as if by intuition, always took to him instantaneously. He would play with them just as if he were of their own age and it was a favourite habit of his to get on his hands and knees and act as their horse, carrying as many as four or five of them at a time on his back. He would sit for hours telling them stories which he would make up on the spur of the moment, and by bringing in the names of the children present and idolising them as heroes, fairies, giant killers and genii, fill them at one moment with consternation and in another send them into roars of laughter. It was a common occurrence for the little ones to run up to him as soon as they caught sight of him anywhere and say, "Mr. Wensley, please tell me that story about me again. I want to tell it to mother." It was also a treat to notice the careful and attentive way in which he would nurse a little baby. Yes, Malcolm Wensley loved children immensely and he often longed to have children of his own.

Malcolm was very fond of dancing but during the last five years mainly on account of the dislike he had taken to ladies he had not been to a single dance. But on the occasion of the Annual Medical Ball a friend of Charles was determined that he should be present practically dragged him to it.

Malcolm met at the Ball a friend of his

school-days who, noticing that Malcolm was not dancing, introduced him to a young lady, a, Miss Martha Ley. As is customary Malcolm asked for and obtained the promise of a dance. It was the next waltz.

Malcolm was struck with Miss Ley's beauty. He felt as if he had never seen a more beautiful person before. She was quite a small woman standing just above five feet in height. Slim, but well developed. She had a roman type of features, dark blue eyes and a luxuriant growth of auburn hair. During the dance she pleaded that she was feeling a trifle tired and Malcolm led her out into a secluded alcove. If Malcolm was astonished at her beauty and the graceful way in which she danced, he was far more astonished at her brilliance in conversation. The peculiar turn and pose of her head whenever she wished to say something emphatic, and the innocent twinkle in her eye as she listened in animated attention to all that was said to her quite captivated him. He spoke very little during the ten minutes they were together. She did most of the talking and he listened in mute admiration. When she requested him to lead her back into the hall he actually was bold enough to ask for another dance. Later he obtained her permission to call on her at her father's house. From independent enquiries he subsequently made he ascertained that her father was a Superintendent of Post Offices and was in fairly affluent



circumstances and that she was the eldest of three children, two girls and a boy.

Malcolm never before felt time drag so frightfully slow as the five days before he made his first call. Latterly he had become a trifle careless about his dress but in these few days he overhauled his wardrobe and placed orders for all that he required.

He spent fully an hour over his toilet the afternoon he was to call. When he arrived at the house he sent in his card. Martha came out herself to meet him accompanied by her father. Martha appeared to him ten times more beautiful than she did on the night of the dance. He could see that she was pleased to see him and that she had obviously taken especial care to look her best.

Tea was served in the drawing<sup>g</sup> room. The conversation was confined largely to enquiries about mutual friends. When Malcolm rose to go he felt that he had taken a big step toward the realisation of the ambition of his life and when Mr. Ley told him to be sure to call again he cheerfully replied. "Most certainly I shall Mr. Ley. Thank you very much for asking me. I only hope you wont think me too much of a nuisance if I call too often."

But Malcolm was very cautious. He did not thrust himself upon the Leys. But he contrived to see Martha or to be seen by her as often as possible. He made it a point to visit the Victoria Gardens and the Oval on band

days as he had discovered that the Leys invariably went to hear the band. It was at the gardens he had the pleasure of being introduced to Martha's sister, Ethel. She also was a pretty girl and Malcolm experienced a sense of delight in the thought that he might possibly be her brother-in-law before very long. He noticed that Martha was much sought after and admired. She was extremely pleasant, and agreeably courteous. She had a soft voice and a kind heart. She appeared to have no particular favourites. He noticed that she had the common failing of her sex in that she was pleased at flattery and attention from men but her behaviour was always lady like and unimpeachable. Only those who were jealous of her popularity, called her a flirt. All others spoke of her as "that dear charming little Miss Ley." The more Malcolm saw of her the more deeply he fell in love with her and it was with great difficulty that he constrained himself on several occasions from declaring his love. He felt that it would be too risky for him to speak out until she had come to know him better and at least evinced a decided preference for his company. He noticed that she never missed being present at the band, although now and then her sister did, and that she permitted him to hold her hand in his a trifle longer than was strictly correct whenever he wished her, but all this was too slender to build any definite hopes upon. Generally, he was very hopeful. It was the

practice of his life to be optimistic, but at times he was attacked with fits of despondency. On such occasions he imagined that Martha looked upon him merely as one of her numerous admirers and that the dearest object of his life would never be realised.

A few months later the Leys were invited to an evening at home at one of their friends, the Carpenters. Malcolm was delighted at receiving an invitation too.

The Leys and the Carpenters were very old friends. Mrs. Carpenter had seven daughters. The youngest Gwendolyn had attended the same school as Martha. The two girls had entertained and developed a passionate liking for each other. They were always together. At school they were known as "The Inseparables." Their attachment was in a sense unusual considering that Martha was five years older than Gwendolyn. Ethel Ley disliked Gwendolyn Carpenter because she felt that Martha loved and appreciated Gwendolyn above every body else, not excepting herself. She made no secret of her feelings and on one occasion she went so far as to prophesy that Martha would yet rue the day she met Gwendolyn Carpenter. ,

It was arranged that Malcolm was to accompany the Leys to the entertainment. He arrived at their place in good time. Mr. Ley was, however, somewhat delayed, and as Martha said she did not wish to be late he asked Malcolm to go on in advance with her

and to send the carriage back when he and Ethel would follow. They drove in an open phaeton. Never did Martha look more captivating to Malcolm than she did on that night as she lay back on the soft cushions, her glossy hair, her bare arms and white neck, glittering in the shining moonlight. All that he was able to do was to gaze on her in profound admiration.

"Why are you so silent to-night, Mr. Wensley," enquired Martha.

In answer Malcolm broke out, "Martha, Martha, I love you, say you love me and that you will be my wife."

She made no answer but put her hand in his and looked into his eyes.

"How soon can you marry me darling," he asked.

"I think Malcolm it would be best if you said nothing for a few months. After that you can speak to papa and if he consents we can get married as soon as you wish. I know that father likes you but there is the difficulty because we belong to different religions."

Malcolm waited patiently for six months. He was very happy all this time as he frequently saw Martha and spent many happy hours in her company. He then spoke to her father who consented on the understanding that all children of the marriage were to belong to the Church of England. Mr. Ley was against a long

engagement and the marriage was accordingly arranged to take place at the end of the year.

Malcolm's salary at the time was two hundred rupees a month. He considered this a good income for a young married couple to begin on. But he felt that it was incumbent on him to continue to help his father after his marriage and he intended to set aside about twenty rupees a month for this purpose. Martha and he never had any disagreement during their courtship. It was wonderful how exactly their tastes agreed. There was not a single matter in which they did not think and feel alike. Malcolm had only to express his views on any subject or state his likes or dislikes in connection with any matter and Martha would immediately say, "how strange Malcolm. It is exactly how I feel." But when one day he told her that he would have to hypothecate about twenty rupees a month from his pay towards helping his father he noticed she was unusually silent. This led him to ask her whether she feared she would not be able to manage on the remainder of his salary and he sillily added, "of course if that is so Martha we might wait until I get another increase."

"Anything but that," she said.

Considering all the incessant anxiety and trouble his father had gone through by reason of his debts, Malcolm had a holy horror of ever falling into the hands of money lenders. He

often prayed that whatever form of punishment God thought fit to impose on him he would be spared the awful tortures of debt. It was not surprising, therefore, that he remarked, "Martha it shall be exactly as you wish, dear, but I look to you never to get into debt. In fact Martha I shall regard it as a test of your love for me to keep out of debt."

"It is a very simple test, Malcolm, so please don't have any anxiety about the matter. I love you and every wish of yours is a command to me."

For answer Malcolm took her into his arms and smothered her with kisses.

Mr. Ley was determined to have a grand reception for the wedding and a not inconsiderable sum was spent by him. Ethel Ley and Gwendolyn Carpenter were the bridesmaids. Martha looked charming in her soft bridal robes. The filmiest of *ninon-de-soie* gracefully draped over a shadow lace foundation was most effective. The beauty of the frock was enhanced by the orange blossom posies which peeped out so becomingly from among the graceful folds of dress and train. She wore a handsome diamond pendant the gift of the bridegroom and carried a shower bouquet of lovely white blossoms. The veil which fell so daintily over a wreath of heather and orange blossoms was the one worn by her great grandmother. Among the many congratulations Malcolm received, two

made a deep impression on him. One was from Mrs. Carpenter. "Mr. Wensley," she said, "I am going to call you Malcolm from to-day because you have married my daughter Gwendolyn's best friend. Please remember that I have always been more or less a mother to Martha. If ever you need advice or assistance and you think that I may be able to give it to you, don't hesitate to come to me." The other was from Gwendolyn Carpenter. "Mr. Wensley," she whispered in her tempting musical voice, "you can't imagine how happy I am today. I always liked you and I feel so glad that you have married such a good girl as Martha. She is very sensitive Mr. Wensley, please never speak a rude word to her. I'll pray every night for your welfare and happiness."

After the ceremony and reception Martha and Malcolm left for Agra to spend the honeymoon there.

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## CHAPTER III.

### **The First Cloud.**

They had not been married a month when Martha astonished Malcolm one morning while they were at breakfast by informing him that she had written to her uncle at Kodaikanal and had received an invitation from him to spend a couple of months there, and she proposed leaving in the course of a week. Malcolm felt very grieved that she should have made any arrangements without consulting him and he was considerably hurt at the thought that she desired to leave him so soon after they had been married. He found it impossible to say anything for a time. If he had spoken out at once he should have told her that he was disappointed in her behaviour; but Malcolm had resolved never in his life to speak a harsh word to Martha or say anything that might give her pain, so he held his tongue.

It was Martha who broke the silence again. "I am very sorry Malcolm if you are disappointed. I can see you are, but really I must go away for a time. I am very grieved myself to have to go, but I must. Don't ask me why Malcolm, I can't tell you, at all events not just yet. I'll write and let you know darling. It's in our best interests."

"Thank you dear," he said, "I am required to do some canvassing work this year. I'll take



the opportunity of doing it while you are away. Don't be distressed dear, I have great confidence that you are acting rightly. I have no wish to press you in the matter and after all you are perhaps yet a bit shy of me, aren't you? but dear, do write early and let me know the reasons you refer to."

"I will Malcom, but let us change the subject. Wont you?"

It was with a weary heart that he parted with her at the station and only after he had obtained from her the promise that she would write to him daily, if only to tell him that she was well and happy: "Don't be surprised," he said, "if I run up there for a few days."

Martha was true to her promise. She wrote to him daily, but she made no mention of the reason why she had gone away.\* Her reticence made him very anxious. Many of his friends remarked that he appeared irritable, a phase of character he had never shown before. It was also very painful to him to overhear a remark that he was pining because his wife had given him the slip. He almost began to suspect something mysterious in Martha's conduct, or degrading in his own, which led to Martha's not wishing to live with him, when his eyes were opened to the truth by Mrs. Carpenter. She called on him one evening and accused him of being, "very weak," for permitting Martha to run away "like that"—"of course she'll get over that feeling," she said.

"Mrs. Carpenter," he stammered, "I am very sorry that you should have occasion to find fault with my treatment of Martha. I assure you I am totally in the dark as to what you are referring to."

"You stupid boy," she said, "don't you know why Martha has left you, and is she ever going to come back if you sit moping and sucking your thumb. She says she's afraid to live with you as she does not want to have any children. Fancy she says that if she has any children she will either go mad or kill them."

Malcolm was thunderstruck. His whole life was centered on the prospect of having children to love and care for, who would attract him to the home and keep him from temptations. He felt his legs trembling under him, his heart cold and his throat suffocating. When he essayed to speak, his voice was hoarse and dry.

"Be a man, Malcolm," said Mrs. Carpenter, "have a little character in you or you will regret it all your life. Go at once to Kodai-kanal and bring that foolish girl back with you and teach her that she's got to obey you. The marriage vows are still fresh in her mind, insist now, without delay, on their observance. If you lose ground now you will never regain it and both your lives will be spoilt."

"If there is one thing in my life that I shall never do Mrs. Carpenter, it is to exercise the authority you speak of. I notice that you refer to a person being a man if he acts in the

way you suggest, but the view I take is that it is only a coward who will behave in that fashion. I am confident that with kindness, with respect for her wishes and feelings, and above all with patience, Martha will come to my way of thinking. It is only a question of time. I don't pretend that this is not a great disappointment to me or that I am not going to suffer under the trial but I regard this as a test of my love for her. The more tests one is subjected to, the more opportunities one has of proving the depth of one's love and forbearance."

"All this is very well in novels, Malcolm, but not in practical life. I have always felt that you are a sensible boy but I have also always had doubts about you ; you seem to me to be too good and too soft for this world. But as I said just now you are sensible and as such I expect that you will agree that we women understand one another better, and that I am in a far better position, in a case like the present one, to judge of the action that should be taken, than you, a newly married husband blinded with love and of a puritanical disposition. Please don't think I wish to be rude to you. I like you very much, Malcolm. I am thinking only of your happiness and I am convinced that if you act in the direction indicated by you, your life will never be a happy one. Take my advice, Malcolm, and go to Kodaikanal to-night if you can manage it. Every day makes a great difference."

"My dear Mrs. Carpenter, you speak as if some serious difference has taken place between Martha and myself whereas you know that I shall *never* allow any difference to occur. Give and take is my motto, but I assure you that although I feel convinced that I have come to the right conclusion I shall consider very carefully all that you have said."

"Stupid boy," was all she muttered, and she went away.

Shortly after this Malcolm left Bombay on canvassing work for his firm. When he returned he was informed by the Head of the firm that he was under orders of transfer to the firm's branch at Calcutta. He was to go there on the same salary he was drawing at the time but the promise was held out to him that if he qualified for the appointment he would, after the present incumbent's agreement terminated, be appointed Assistant Manager of the Branch at Calcutta. Martha decided to go with him to Calcutta.

It was a tedious job to find sale for their furniture and they had eventually to leave many articles of value behind when they left Bombay. The transfer, involving the purchase of furniture twice within the space of a few months, made a big strain on Malcolm's scanty savings. In Bombay they had lived in a comfortable suite of rooms in a good locality at a monthly rental of thirty-five rupees. Here, in Calcutta, although they were paying fifty

rupees a month, all that they had were two small dingy dark rooms, and a bathroom not large enough to turn a cat round. The house was situated in a dirty and dark bye lane and their co-tenants were not quite of the same class they had associated with in Bombay. All this disheartened Martha a great deal and she was always at Malcolm to find brighter and better rooms in more congenial surroundings. He, poor fellow, did his best, but not knowing Calcutta and not having any friends to interest themselves in him he was at a considerable disadvantage. He came across many better places but the rents were all so exorbitant. He could not afford to pay more than fifty or sixty rupees in house rent. Not having had much in the way of comfort or luxury when he was a boy he didn't feel the change very severely, but Martha whose father had always been well off was growing more dissatisfied every day. Before they had been in Calcutta a month, Martha informed Malcolm, in quite a matter of fact way, that she could not live in Calcutta on less than three hundred rupees a month. "You see Malcolm," she complained, "everything cost twice as much as in Bombay."

He tried to convince her that the difference was largely due to her inexperience of Calcutta and expressed the hope that if she looked about and made a few good friends who might be willingly to help her it would be possible to manage on considerably less. She seemed

annoyed at the suggestion and remarked, "Very well, Malcolm, I'll do my best for the next three months and then if I cannot manage on your salary I'll go back to father. You can send me just as much as you can spare after meeting your expenses. I expect you will have to go into a cheap boarding house." And then for the first time she made a remark which he considered to have been quite uncalled for. "I hope," she said "that you are not thinking of sending your father anything while you are in Calcutta and on this miserable salary."

Malcolm made no reply but walked out of the room into the open. He was deeply wounded by Martha's remark. The change in his circumstances and Martha's obvious and not wholly unjustifiable discontent were in themselves grievous anxieties to him, but he was determined whatever it cost him, even for instance if he had to give up his lunch and walk to and from office, he would continue to help his father as he was convinced that the assistance was really needed. He felt it impossible to tell Martha after her rude remark, of what he had resolved to forfeit in order to continue helping his people but he also felt it quite impossible to deceive her and contrive a means of rendering the assistance without her knowledge. He was therefore in a dilemma. The following month he drew a hundred and fifty rupees out of his savings. He gave Martha one hundred and thirty and told her he was sending twenty rupees to his father, he added that this would

be the last remittance unless he was able to find some way of rendering the help without encroaching on his pay or savings. Martha said nothing but he could see that she was displeased.

The only way he could think of earning more money was to do proof reading at a press. In answer to advertisements he inserted in the Newspapers he secured such employment. He had to work for five days in the week; one hour in the morning and one in the evening. He earned about twenty-five rupees a month and this money he remitted to his father. Martha did not like his doing this work and more than once she said, "why don't you find some more work to help your people and deprive me of your company." If she expected him to say anything in reply she was mistaken.

At the end of three months she left for Bombay as she declared that it was ruinous to live in Calcutta. He promised to send her half his pay and to meet all other expenses from the remainder. She required a hundred and fifty rupees to go to Bombay and as he was unable to find the money having spent all his savings, she withdrew two hundred rupees of her own, which money she had received as wedding presents and met her expenses therefrom.

She staved away for nearly a year. During all this time she wrote to him regularly every day. Her letters were always cheerful and

loving and she always spoke of missing him very much. Not a month, however, passed without her requiring further money in addition to his regular remittance. On an average she required about fifty rupees more monthly. Her demands were always imperative so he had to find the money. To give her all she wanted he had to give up boarding. He rented a room and lived on bread, cheese eggs and tea. He could not afford to employ a servant.

Shortly afterwards the firm increased his pay to three hundred rupees. Martha heard about this. Before Malcolm could inform her of the good news she wired to him to make arrangements to receive her as she was leaving immediately for Calcutta. He feared to go to the expense of setting up house again especially as Martha was so erratic. He therefore made arrangements for rooms and boarding for the both of them in a fairly decent locality. Martha was not at all satisfied with what he had done and definitely threatened to go back again, at once, if he did not obtain a flat for themselves and allow her to run her own establishment. To meet her wishes he was forced, for the first time in his life, to go to the money lenders. He wanted only three hundred rupees but he could not get it without two sureties. Only a self respecting man who has been in the same position can imagine what it cost him to ask others to stand surety. He and his sureties had to sign a bond for six hundred rupees and to agree to pay interest at the rate of twelve and



a half per cent per mensem. Malcolm had every hope of clearing this debt in the course of five or six months but owing to circumstances beyond his control it dragged on for more than two years. He paid as much as twelve hundred rupees to redeem the bond.

Martha and he were fairly happy for about six months, when a great calamity befell them. Her father died. She felt the loss terribly and for days he found it difficult to get her to speak a word. After a fortnight she informed him that he must find her the money to go down to Bombay if only for a few days, as she felt that she must see her sister at this crisis of their life. "I know that you are very hard up Malcolm," she said, "but it will be the last time I shall leave you."

His heart went out to her as he watched the painful expression on her face and the tears dropping one by one on her cheeks.

"I will try my best to get you the money to-day dear," he said.

He interviewed the head of the firm at Calcutta and asked for an advance of a hundred rupees. The Chief was very sympathetic and wired to Bombay for orders. The sanction to the advance was received the same day and he was thus able to take the money home with him in the afternoon. Martha met him at the door, "Malcolm I am quite ready to go by to-night's mail Don't say that you have failed."

"No, dear, I have got the money, but I had hoped that you would stay for a day or two and be a little more reconciled to your loss before you started. I cannot bear to let you go away while you are in this state."

She became irritable and showed it. "What do you expect me to do," she said, "do you fancy that in a week or so I shall be dancing a polka? You always were a cruel fellow Malcolm. Give me the money."

He paid no attention to her rude remark. The shock at the news of her father's death was enough to unnerve the strongest person. He felt that he should certainly be guilty of downright cruelty if he took notice of her remark and made it the means of a quarrel. They had been married two years and had never quarreled. He was determined never to quarrel with her. Surely a time may come when due to ill health or adversity he may be unnerved and irritable and perhaps rude and unpleasant, wouldn't Martha then be patient and forbearing? of course she would.

He gave her the money and helped her to pack. They had early dinner together and she seemed quite composed. 'Don't I look as if I can take care of myself you silly,' she asked. She spoke in so tempting a tone that, in answer he got up and kissed her. "Come back soon Martha," he said, "you can't imagine how lonely I feel when you are away."

"And I suppose you think that I am very

happy when I am away from you Malcolm. No, I also suffer. I imagine all sorts of evils befalling you. Sometimes I dream that you have become a drunkard and a gambler and sometimes, oh ! it is too horrible to mention, that you go after other women. And when I have these dreams I am quite ill the next day. My whole body is in a tremor and I get a start at the least noise and—”

“Stop Martha,” he cried, “I am now a full grown man, to none of these temptations have I yet fallen. Is it likely that I will go to the bad as I get on in years ? Oh no, I am sure I am strong enough to go through life without becoming a drunkard, a gambler or a libertine.”

“You won’t have a chance in the future Malcolm, because when I come back I am never going to leave you again.”

“Amen ” he said.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### A Rupture.

Martha remained away for four months. When she returned she was peculiarly restless. She always wanted to go out at nights, and much against Malcolm's inclination dragged him to theatres and dances and bioscope entertainments. Almost every evening she would invite some one over to tea or go out herself on invitation to some of her friends. Malcolm's work and private employment kept him busy from seven in the morning till seven at night. It was quite impossible for him therefore to be present at these evening functions, or to accompany her except on Saturdays. He did not, however, grudge her these enjoyments. He felt that her conduct was mainly due to her sad bereavement and that after a time she would grow tired of the continual round of pleasure and settle down to a quiet homely life. But the strain was telling on his health and he knew that if it continued much longer he should soon be very seriously involved in debt. As it was, he had towards the close of every month to borrow small sums of money at high rates of interest. He repaid the loan with interest on the first of each month but the amount he had to repay was naturally growing larger and larger. He did not like just then to question Martha's behaviour or in any way to

hurt her feelings, but he was not slow to notice that instead of growing weary of pleasure she and her friends seemed to be always on the look out for fresh avenues of enjoyment and new flights of merriment. Garden parties, moonlight picnics and boat trips followed one another in quick succession ; of course he was invited to all these entertainments, but he seldom went to any of them. This, however, did not exempt him from meeting a share of the expenses. After a while he made up his mind to speak frankly to Martha and, explaining his financial position, to ask her to slow down gradually, but almost at the same time an incident occurred which made it impossible for him to address Martha on the subject. Quite unexpectedly he received the following letter from his father.

My dear son,

I have very sad news for you. I tried to spare you trouble, but I have no one else to turn to. In other circumstances Beatrice would have assisted me in my present difficulty but her husband, Stephen, is very ill and she has many expenses to meet. As for Charles, no one knows what has become of him since he was turned out of the college. You know that I have always been a very proud man and have never begged a pice from anybody, and God alone knows how much it has cost me to write this letter to you. My only excuse for doing so is the fact that you are my son. Although you

are quite aware of all that I have been through to give you and Charles a decent up bringing and a good education, I feel that I must ask you to consider all the privations I have already suffered. For the last fifteen years I have never been able to earn more than ninety rupees a month. When I saw that both you and Charles were growing up intelligent and were likely to do well in the world, I had hoped that you would be with me for some years, and that I should be able to see better days. I have done without much in the past, often I have lived with only one meal a day, but now that I am getting old I feel the need for comfort and ease. I have had recently for instance to employ a push to go to office and I am unable to eat anything unless I take a drink first. But my hopes have been completely shattered. No doubt Charles would have been in a position to help me if he had passed out as a doctor. I have always been very grateful for your help but have you really been doing all you can and should for me, Malcolm. You get three hundred rupees a month. It is imposible, however extravagant you may be, for you to spend more than half that sum every month. You must therefore have a big banking account by now. I am glad of it my boy. It is a great pleasure to me to see you doing well, and may God bless you and prosper you.

But to return to my troubles. One of my superiors here passed some rude personal remarks about me. As a result, I had in self-res-

pect to send in my resignation. The question I have to face now is, what am I to do for the future. Bombay is a cursed placed. Employers will shamelessly offer me a job on twenty-five rupees if I go about from one place to another. I am too proud to remain idle and live on you or any one else. I have thought the matter over very carefully and have decided to go to Burma. One has a better chance there. I have decided to take Grace with me. I reckon that it will cost me about four hundred rupees to pay away all my debts here, to buy our passage to Burma and to live in Rangoon for say one month without employment. Now, dear boy, will you kindly, as soon as you receive this letter, send me the amount I need or anything more you can conveniently spare.

With our united love to you and Martha.

Your affectionate,

FATHER.

Grace was Mr. Wensley's second wife. He had only been married a fortnight when he lost his appointment. He was then fifty-four years of age.

Malcolm's position was a very grave one. Remembering Martha's unkind remark on a previous occasion, he felt it impossible to speak to her about her extravagance in view of this letter, especially as he could see that he would have to meet his father's request at any cost. He showed Martha the letter.

"I suppose you will have to borrow the money to help your father, Malcolm. Isn't it a nuisance."

"I suppose so dear," he replied.

"Well, you might borrow five hundred instead of four, and give the extra hundred to me. I must have a few new frocks, Malcolm. I feel quite shabby when I go out to a picnic or to afternoon tea. There's a good boy."

He said nothing, but Martha seemed content. She had never yet been refused a request by him and he was sure she took it for granted that he would get her the money.

He had great difficulty in raising the loan. Finally on the recommendation of a friend he went to Watgunge, the abode of the Kabulis. It cost Malcolm a lot to go to this class of people. He detested them. His hatred had sprung from two or three disgraceful incidents to which he had been an eye witness. Coming out of the Howrah railway station one morning, he had seen a Kabuli, dressed in his loose dirty white pyjamas, his green fancy waistcoat and his large white turban, persecute an old and feeble porter. The Kabuli fisted him and kicked him and finally spat upon him. The poor man fell on his knees and placing his two hands together in a supplicating manner implored the Kabuli to have mercy upon him. But the money lender was unforgiving. He jerked the man to his feet and struck him with his *lathi*. "I'll teach you how to hide from me,"



he said. He was about to strike the old man another blow when Malcolm intervened. "Leave that old man alone," he commanded, "or you'll regret it all your life." The Kabuli released his grip and walked away muttering something between his teeth which Malcolm could not hear.

"Huzur," cried the old porter, "I am sorry you interfered. He'll beat me to death after you depart."

"How much do you owe him," enquired Malcolm. "Ten rupees, the amount I borrowed, and twelve rupees interest, Huzur," replied the porter. Malcolm gave him twenty-five rupees and told him to go and clear his debt.

The other incident occurred at his house. One of his co-tenants was in the hands of these bloodsuckers. Looking out of his window one morning Malcolm saw the money lender make improper gestures to the wife of his victim. The sight quite sickened Malcolm. He began to dress hurriedly in order to go out and thrash the offender but Martha on hearing what he intended doing, begged of him not to get himself, "mixed up in these affairs." "Let us be thankful we are clear of these people," She remarked.

The third case was that of a widow who owed one of these incorrigible money lenders the small sum of fifteen rupees, but who was so molested by him that she told a friend of hers that she often thought of

putting an end to herself whenever he called at the house or accosted her in the street, which he was in the habit of doing even if she went out at nights.

At Watgunge he met a Kabuli whom he had seen previously knocking about his shop. The man approached Malcolm and after a few minutes conversation, offered to lend him the money he required at ten per cent per mensem. It was a real surprise to Malcolm how much this man knew about him. He knew his salary, the fact that he was married but had no children, that he was already in debt, the extent to which he was in debt and the parties to whom he was indebted. "I know, Sir," he said, "that you always pay regularly. If you take the money from me I am in no hurry to be repaid, but you must pay me the interest without fail before the tenth of each month. If you fail I shall take out a decree against you at once. I listen to no excuses. I have no compassion."

Malcolm felt inclined to kick the man, but kicking him would not have helped. Realising this and also that he must get the money at any cost, he agreed with some show of reluctance to the Kabuli's terms.

Malcolm believed much in the power of prayer and he accordingly prayed fervently and unceasingly that Martha would be moved to think more of her home and that she would be turned to live a quiet and contented

life ; but matters went from bad to worse and at times he despaired of ever clearing his debts. As the first of each month came round and he had to pay out large sums in interest alone he was tempted to resign his situation and spite his creditors, but he set aside the temptation as being dishonourable to any self-respecting man. Besides he had Martha to think of, and he had also to help his father.

His father remained in Rangoon for six months. He wrote to Malcolm regularly during this period. His ill luck followed him there, and he was unable to obtain employment. Now and then he wrote of the hardships he had to put up with. He never asked Malcolm for further help but knowing that there was no one else who would assist him Malcolm sent his father forty rupees a month. Martha was very angry about this and continually referred to these remittances as wasteful expenditure. "Why don't you tell your father to come here," she would say, "it wont cost forty rupees to feed them and employment is easier to find in Calcutta. Further, I don't see any reason why Mrs. Wensley herself, should not work, she is young and buxom and must pay the penalty for marrying an old fogie."

"I am afraid Martha you are becoming rather coarse of late," Malcolm remarked.

"Its about all you can do lately Malcolm, to get afraid." "Do you fancy you'll ever get out of your debts unless you choke off your

poor relatives. That's what all people, who get on better than their relatives, do. Don't you know the Speaks. The two elder brothers who are doing very well don't notice the youngest. They say they are not related to him. But, come now, something must be done if you wont agree to choke them off. Write at once and ask them to come to Calcutta."

Notwithstanding the rude attitude which Martha displayed Malcolm became convinced that the most economical step in the long run would be for him to get his parents to come to Calcutta. But how was he to get the money to pay for their passages. He could not afford to go to the money lenders. He was already paying eighty rupees a month in interest alone. Although he felt quite ashamed to do it he wrote to Mrs. Carpenter and asked her if she could help him. He applied to her because she had offered to help him if ever he was in difficulty. He was successful in his venture. Having ascertained in the meantime from his father that he was quite agreeable to come to Calcutta he sent him the money.

The day his parents arrived he was sorry he had ever invited them to come to him. Martha, who had up to that time been in boisterous spirits and full of gaiety, pleaded indisposition and retired to her bed room. She excused herself from coming out to meals but at the same time refused to see a doctor. Her behaviour struck Malcolm as peculiar and he was

tempted at times to think it was deliberately designed to make his father feel his position. But Malcolm was never one to misjudge others, especially those whom he loved, so he schooled himself to believe that Martha was really indisposed and would be amongst them in a few days. In this, however, he was disappointed. A whole month passed and yet Martha did not come to the dining table once. As they occupied the rooms in the first floor and his father those on the ground floor it was easy for Martha to avoid seeing them. Malcolm himself was very little in the house. Soon after his father had gone to Burma he saw that in order to help him and to keep his own head above water he must earn more. As there was no prospect of obtaining any immediate increase to his salary he had to look out for still further private employment, and was lucky enough in being engaged to sell tickets at one of the Theatres. This meant that he had to be out every day except Sundays between 8-30 and 11 P.M. Although he had a very hard time of it he was never more happy than when at work. It was only when he was away from work that he had time to think of his money and other troubles, and often he would lie awake a whole night trying to devise some plan of alleviating his misfortune.

A near relative of his father, Ivan Thompson by name, was a very rich man. It was commonly reported that he was worth close on two or three lakhs. Sometimes the idea occurred to Malcolm to go and ask this relative to give him

a loan at a moderate rate of interest ; a sufficient sum to enable him to clear all his debts and put him on his feet, he, on his part, undertaking to repay regularly a fixed sum monthly. But the elderly relative was a miser. He was sixty five years of age and a bachelor. He lived on bread and water and had no friends. His relatives had long since ceased to have anything to do with him, much perhaps to his liking. Many stories were told of his meanness and Malcolm remembered the following one very well.

A sister of the miser went one morning to see him. After she had been there about half an hour, during which time he talked incessantly fearing, lest if he allowed her to open her mouth, she would ask him for monetary assistance, he remarked.

"Clara, it is time you went home for breakfast. You look faint. I have nothing in the house child that I could offer you. I used to keep tea and biscuits before, but so many friends would call and wait until I gave them a cup of tea and then, stimulated perhaps by the beverage, they would ask me for a loan, that I stopped getting tea in the house. No one ever comes to see me unless it is for money. Why people will worship money so, I can't understand. Can't they live as I do and avoid all such troubles. I have no sympathy with the person who wants to borrow. No borrower ever intends to repay. Borrowing is social thieving ; that's what it is."

Another suggestion that occurred to him was to write to Mr. Andrew Carnegie and ask him to help him. He felt sure that if the facts of his case were fully and fairly put to this magnanimous millionaire he would assist him with a loan. But whether it was from want of determination or some other cause he did not act on either of these ideas.

After his father had been a fortnight in Calcutta, and had up to then been unsuccessful in obtaining employment, he offered to do Malcolm's work at the theatre. Malcolm broached the subject of the proposal to the Manager of the theatre but the latter expressed regret that he could not accede to the request.

As may be imagined Malcolm was so busy that he found very little time to talk either to Martha or to his parents. When he got home between eleven and twelve every night he felt very tired and he longed for his bed. As Martha and he slept in different rooms they saw very little of one another. Often she would be out when he came home at night, he was invariably too tired to sit up and wait for her but she would always on such occasions awaken him to help her in undressing. This disturbance inconvenienced him very much as after he was awakened he found it very difficult to get sleep again, but he never complained. It was usually on nights such as these that he brooded over his lot, but he believed in God and that God would soon relieve him of his anxieties and troubles. He felt he was only being

tried and that he would soon be out of all his difficulties. In what manner he was to obtain the necessary relief he could not imagine, but with God all things were possible. He never missed praying every morning and evening, and he always got up from his knees more light hearted and cheerful.

It was not long, however, before another great trial befell him. Coming home one night from the Printing Press he found that a violent quarrel was taking place between Martha and his father and mother. Malcolm never heard exactly what transpired in the earlier stages of the quarrel but when he entered the house Martha was speaking.

“I wonder you all have no sense of shame to sponge on us like this for such a long time and then be unthankful for the good we give you. Look at Malcolm, he works so hard and yet has no complaint to make. Of course nothing will ever be palatable to the idle and lazy. If you are too old and feeble Mr. Wensley to get employment, why don't you send out your young and buxom wife to work. There are heaps of shops where they will employ her for thirty or forty rupees a month, if for nothing else, for her size. She makes a good advertisement. No, no, you won't do that; you'd rather see my husband worked to death. My God, I would never have married Malcolm, if I knew that by doing so I would be marrying the whole family. It is bad enough to be re-



lated to such as you, but to have you stuck up to us is absolutely intolerable."

"Don't forget yourself, Martha," Malcolm interrupted.

Malcolm's father then burst out. "If you don't shut up, you little spitfire, I'll positively thrash you. If you had been given a thrashing long ago you would have been brought to your bearings. My son has been sacrificed on you. The devil was at work when he married you. You pretend to him that you are too ill to come down to dinner but you are not too ill to dress up and receive visitors during the day, many of whom are young men. You speak of your husband's having to work to feed us. Do you forget that I fed and educated him for seventeen years. What claims have you on him. If I were your husband, I'd soon put a stop to all your pranks and teach you how to speak to your elders and betters. Go, go away at once, or I'll not be answerable for what I do."

"Father," Malcolm said, "how can you speak like this, I am sure you don't know what you are saying."

"Shut up, you scoundrel," he snapped addressing Malcolm. "I am ever sorry you are *my son*. I have borne your indifferent treatment long enough. You have hardly ever spoken a word to me since I have come here. You are an ungrateful wretch. You are like your mother. If you had any regard for me you would never have asked me to come to

your house. You must have known how I would be insulted by your beast of a wife. Damn it man, I almost think you purposely brought me here to insult me, so as to avoid giving me any assistance in future. Save your money you swine, you'll be specially allowed to take it with you when you die. Don't open your mouth to say a word, I'll thrash you if you do. My word I shall. Go, get out of my presence at once, and take my advice and change your name. Call yourself D'Cruz or DeSantos or any damned Portuguese name. I am ashamed to own you as my son."

Malcolm dropped his head and walked out of the house. "My God," he said, "how sadly I have been misunderstood. It is true I hardly spoke to my father but I refrained from doing so because I was so fully occupied and because Martha was ever nagging at me about them and about my paying them every attention and neglecting her."

Malcolm was in great distress as to how he was to act. He knew it was now impossible for Martha and them to live in the same house and yet how was he to manage to keep them apart. If he had to engage a separate establishment for his father it would be a costly arrangement, more costly than he could in his present circumstances afford. The cheapest course was to find them the money to go to his sister Eileen at Bombay, but how was he to suggest this. Indeed how

was he to suggest anything in view of the attitude taken up by his father. But this was not all, he had yet to face Martha and hear all she would have to say. He returned home at midnight. The place was in darkness and he let himself in noiselessly. He proceeded at once to Martha's bed room and switched on the light; to his horror he found that she was not in bed. He searched all the other rooms but she was not in any of them. Vague fears were arising in his mind and he was on the point of rushing downstairs and asking his father if he knew where Martha had gone when his eye caught sight of a letter addressed to him in her handwriting. He opened the letter. It read as follows.

"Malcolm! you coward! I always thought you were a coward, why didn't you have the courage to strike your father when he spoke so rudely to me and so shamelessly insulted me. You would often say that you would never allow any one to insult me. Don't think I ever believed you. I used only to laugh at you. I knew you were too much of a coward to stand up against any man. Why, a girl in short frocks will frighten you if only she talks loud enough. But I know this is all a scheme to get rid of me. You have had your meals every morning and every evening with your father and all this has been arranged to get me out of the house. Very well, I'm going, please don't trouble to enquire about me. I know how to earn my living. Keep your

money and all the savings your father speaks of for them to enjoy.

I don't wish to see you any more, not even when I am dying.

Your deserted wife,

MARTHA.

As may be expected Malcolm started off at once in search of Martha. It was an unearthly hour to turn people out of their beds to enquire if one's wife had called. And to the three persons on whom he called he explained that Martha had gone out in the evening before he returned from office and as she had not returned home he was naturally very anxious lest any accident should have befallen her. As he approached the house of the fourth friend, the gentleman of the house, a Mr. George, met him at the gate and laying his hands on his shoulder said, "don't speak loud, Wensley, I don't wish it to be known in the house that I am out here. I expected you to call and was on the look out for you. I am sorry for you old chap but you always struck me as being quite incapable of managing a wife." "Yes, yes," he said, as Malcolm was about to interrupt him, "your wife is quite safe. She is up there," and he pointed to his bed room, "with Mrs. George. I have been turned out of my bed for the night, but that's not half as bad as your case."

"Stop this prattling George," said Malcolm,

"take me to my wife. I must comfort her and take her back to-night. Poor girl she writes to me as my *deserted wife*."

"I very much fear that you are the one that has been deserted," said George, "and if you will take the advice of one who knows more of the world than you do, you'll just go back to your house to-night and forget that you are a married man. A little desertion or, shall we say, loss of memory, on your part will soon bring your recalcitrant wife to her senses."

"Impossible man. Impossible. By my marriage vows I am bound to love and cherish my wife and to forsake all others for her sake. It is because I have not forsaken my father and mother and all others and clung only to her that all these troubles have beset me. It is only the punishment I deserve. Let me see her please, I must tell her I shall make a fresh beginning."

"My dear fellow," demurred George, "you talk nonsense. Whatever promises you made, no wife, who has any regard for her husband, has any right to treat his people discourteously or to behave uncharitably, to say the least, when in times of distress he helps them. Talking about vows, your wife promised to obey you; does she?" "Don't be an ass Wensley, you are quite a man at business, harden your heart a little and be more of a man in your house, and you'll find that things will run more smoothly. Women were never meant to have

the upper hand and it is utter foolishness to allow them to have it. If you can conveniently manage it get your people away for some time, and then when your wife comes back let her see that you are the head of the house and that she's got to listen to your wishes and carry them out. Begin by insisting on her giving up her present rambling life. Many of the people she knocks about with are not quite—well—well—quite respectable.”

Malcolm earnestly entreated Mr. George to allow him to see Martha if only for ten minutes but George was obdurate. “You’ll give the whole show away,” he said. “Stiffen your neck a bit and straighten your back and you’ll not regret it. Women never understand a good and tolerant husband. What they want is a strict and commanding person who can get them to do everything that is required of them without beating them, and yet the husband who beats his wife gets on better than soft fellows like you. Such husbands are considered by their wives as possessing a striking personality. Now is the time to make a stand, to-morrow may be too late. There is just one more point,” he continued, “Mrs. Wensley said that she purposed going away to her sister’s at Bombay, the best place for her, by the way, but she hinted that she would require about a hundred rupees to settle up a few bills of hers and to pay for her fare and luggage. Shall I give her the money, you can pay me as soon as convenient.”

"Don't trouble George," Malcolm said, "I'll send you the money in the morning."

It was past two when he reached home. His father opened the door and let him in. "Please wait, I want to have a word or two to say to you, Malcolm," he commanded.

"Can't it wait till the morning, father, I am very tired and my brain is in a whirl. I have been knocking about the streets for the last six hours and feel quite tired and faint."

"I don't care a damn how you feel," he roared. "I want to tell you I don't wish to live another day in this cursed place. As you brought me here to see me insulted I demand it of you to find the money to pay our fares to Bombay. I have wired to Stephen to say I am coming to him."

"Very well, father," Malcolm meekly replied, "I will find the money for you in the morning."

He went upstairs and threw himself on his bed. He found he was unable to say his prayers, and for the first time in his life he doubted the existence of a God.

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## CHAPTER V.

### Deeper into debt.

The three hours before dawn were hours of mental agony to Malcolm. All the teachings and practice for more than twenty years of godly and religious life were in danger of destruction. He had trusted in God. As far as he could remember he had never done a single soul an injury, on the other hand he had, time after time, sacrificed his own interests for the benefit of others. In short, for all these years he had scrupulously and unflinchingly done his duty both to God and to his neighbours. What did he get in return? He looked only for peace of mind. But even this he felt was denied him. Nobody seemed to understand him. Not even his own father who had brought him up and who knew his character fully. "Is it possible," he asked himself, "that after all there is no God? That the grave is the end of all things and that it is only the fools that don't get the best out of life for themselves." Oh! what horrible thoughts were crowding his brain. "Why, oh why," he said to himself, "are they torturing me so. Have I not already suffered enough to-day. Oh what a miserable and despicable creature I must be, that Martha should characterise me as a coward and that my own father should tell me that I had better change my name. How



ashamed he must have been of me to say such a thing. He, who never before spoke a rude word to me. Ah, if I was only sure there was no God, I would this instant kill myself to show both Martha and my father how deeply I feel their remarks."

Time after time the questions arose in his mind, "why should you plunge yourself into debt to gratify the whims of your selfish wife, or the fancies of your hot-tempered father. Does either of them appreciate your self sacrificing devotion? Neither of them does. That should be clear to you. If that is so, why should you do it? Perhaps you think that by self sacrifice here on earth you will earn eternal happiness. If that is your reason are you not really selfish and not unselfish? You are willing to make sacrifices here on earth because life after all is short and eternity so long. If there is a God, can he fail to understand your objective? Are you likely to deceive him? Can there be any other reason why you are making this sacrifice? Does not all this bring you to believe that there is no God? That your life is just the same as any of the other animals. And if you accept this view, as you must, if you will only carefully consider the subject, what earthly reason is there for you to fret? Why should you care for the views and opinions of your wife or your father? Your father has no claim on you. All that he did for you he had to do. It is the obligation of every father to his child. And your wife, she certainly has a claim on you,

but only if she obeys you and lives as you wish her to do. Didn't George make that quite clear to you? Don't be an ass to borrow more money in order to gratify the whims of these inconsiderate people. If as a result of your indebtedness you lose your appointment and are thrown on the streets, make up your mind that the first person to forget you will be your wife. As for your father he has by asking you to change your name already disowned you. Is it likely that he will recognise you as his son when you are a pauper in the streets?

Such were the disturbing thoughts that were crowding his brain and try how he might be could not think of anything else. "Oh my God," he prayed, "if you are a living God. If you are what I was taught even when I was a child, and what I believed you to be, cannot you convince my wife and my father that I have been doing my best for both of them. You performed miracles in the days of old, is it too hard for you to open their eyes that they may understand me. Help me, my God, and I shall devote the remainder of my life to your service. Don't, don't let me be deserted in this way. If I am deserted by both of them, the two persons whom I love best in this world, I shall feel that I am deserted also by you. No, indeed, I shall feel that you do not exist."

He thought and thought on and lo! it was dawn, and with the dawn, the stern realities

of practical life faced him. He remembered his promises to his father and to Mr. George to send them the money required.

He had a cold bath and dressing himself hurriedly, hastened to the Kabuli. Malcolm lived in Scots Lane near Sealdah. He had not a pice in his pocket and therefore had to walk all the way to Watgunge, a matter of four miles. But the walk did him good. As he approached the Kabuli's place he saw the old man sitting on his haunches on a side of the road cleaning his teeth with a piece of stick.

"You have come very early Sahib," said the Kabuli, "but I was expecting you every day for the last week."

"Why were you expecting me," Malcolm demanded.

"When a gentleman does business with me once he generally does business for the rest of his life, Sahib. His blood is in my hands and he comes to see me pretty frequently."

"I want three hundred and fifty rupees," Malcolm interrupted. "Can you see your way to give me the money at once and at a lower rate of interest than what you charged me on the previous occasion." •

"Sahib, if you have insured your life and will endorse your insurance papers to me I will give you sufficient money at five per cent to clear all your debts. This is a very good arrangement, Sahib, only one man to deal with."

“Come to my house next Sunday and talk to me about this proposal,” Malcolm said, “I have no time now to discuss it but, give me the loan of rupees three hundred and fifty I ask for.”

“You may have it at eight per cent,” he said.

“Malcolm agreed, signed a bond for the loan and went direct to work. The first thing he did was to write a letter to Mr. George enclosing a hundred rupees for his wife. He next wrote a short note and sent two hundred to his father. Try how he might he was unable to do a stroke of work all that day. His brain was exhausted for want of sleep, his head was paining frightfully, his nerves were so unstrung that he could hardly hold a pen straight, and his back, good gracious, how it ached, he almost felt as if it were going to break. He was restless the whole day running about from one room to another questioning others in the shop, often unnecessarily. When the clock struck five he left the shop and for the first time in his life entered a public restaurant. He remained there till eight o'clock. He then walked to the Howrah station and stood at the gate of the platform from which the Bombay mail left. He arrived there fully half an hour before the time due for the departure of the mail, as he did not wish on any account to miss seeing Martha. What the officials thought of him as he stood there like a sentinel on duty he did not care.

His expectant eyes were rivetted on the entrance portico and the first persons he recognised were his parents. He did not wish to be seen by them, he was there only for Martha's sake and he was not going to jeopardise his chances of a reconciliation with her by being found by her in the company of his people, because he felt sure she would infer that, as a spiteful action against her, he had accompanied them to the station to see them off.

Ten minutes before the due time he saw Martha and the Georges. As they approached the gate he went up to Martha, but before he could speak a word she slapped him most violently on the face and cried in a loud and hysterical voice. "Get away you coward." He hung his head and walked into the open. For a long time he could not believe he had full possession of his senses. Did Martha really strike him or was he only imagining she had? It was a cruel shock to him and he felt that he could never recover from it. "My God," he said, "you alone know how much I love my wife and what I would not do to give her happiness. Why is everything going so badly with me?"

He left the station and was walking over the Howrah bridge when a hand was laid on his shoulder. Turning round quickly he recognised a friend of his, Mr. Musgrave. Musgrave was one of the gentleman who stood personal surety for Malcolm the first time he had

obtained a loan. He was reputed to be a man possessing landed property and Malcolm knew that he earned at least five to six hundred rupees a month. He was always well dressed, but on this occasion he looked to Malcolm more like a loafer than anything else.

"Wensley," he stammered, "I have been hoping to see you for sometime but didn't quite know where you lived and I did not care to call at your shop. Isn't it lucky I made you out just now. Let me look at you."

As Malcolm turned and came face to face with him, Musgrave exclaimed, "Good gracious man, what is the matter with you? Have you seen a ghost? Come now do you happen to have a few rupees on you?"

On Malcolm replying in the affirmative, Musgrave said, "Well, Wensley, all that you need to put you right is a good stiff peg. I know you are a tee-tee, Wensley, but you need it medicinally, I assure you, you do. Come let's get back to the station refreshment room."

Malcolm followed him mechanically and as soon as they were seated Musgrave ordered two full pegs of brandy and ginger. Malcolm was now able to have a good look at Musgrave. Really he had changed. From a clean, healthy and handsome man, he had been transformed into a sordid, dissipated and demon-like creature. His eyes protruded and his nose was red and swollen. His lips were thick and purple and his face was covered with reddish

blue blotches. He was most shabbily dressed, the worst part being his celluloid collar which had an inch of grease on it. Apparently he noticed that Malcolm had perceived the change in him, for he remarked. "Wensley, I can quite guess what you are thinking about. You hardly like to be seen with me. Never mind, man, drink that peg and hear my story and then judge for yourself."

"You wrong me, Musgrave," Malcolm replied "I could not help but notice the change in you, shall I say the change for the worse, but Musgrave you were a friend to me once when I was in distress, and I shall never forget your kindness on that occasion, and as I can never be ungrateful to you, how can I feel ashamed of you. I am afraid I must disappoint you Musgrave. I cannot take this peg. I did feel inclined to take something to cheer me. You see, the Missus left to-night for Bombay. But to see you in apparent difficulty and in this sad plight has made me entirely forget my disappointment. Do come home and have dinner with me and tell me if there is any way in which I can be of assistance to you."

"I accept your offer, Wensley," he said. "Pass your peg over here. It's too good to be wasted." I suppose you have some whisky at your place."

"Yes, yes, I always keep a little for friends who drop in now and then."

Malcolm paid the bill, hailed a gharri and they drove home together.

After they had had a wash they sat down to dinner. Although there was plenty to eat Malcolm observed that Musgrave hardly touched anything. He kept on taking peg after peg. After dinner they sat out in the verandah and talked about old times. Musgrave was the first to refer to his misfortune and insisted on Malcolm hearing his story. This is the story he unfolded.

“As you must know, Wensley, I was the Assistant Manager of the Federated Insurance Coy., and was getting five hundred a month. I lived carefully and had saved several thousands of rupees. This, together with some money left to me by my father, I invested in Government paper. About a year ago I fell in love with a Miss Chatterton, I don't know if you ever met her. The old man was the Second Presidency Magistrate here for some years. She was an exceedingly pretty girl so much like her mother who was a French lady, and she was well accomplished. I asked her to be my wife and she consented. The day of the marriage was settled and all preparations were made for the wedding. On the night previous to the wedding I was dressing myself when I was summoned hastily by my servant who said that Chatterton's servant had come with a request from Mr. Chatterton that I should call over at once. The man explained that a



taxi had been sent to take me over. I dressed hurriedly and in less than five minutes was at the Chatterton's. The old man met me on the stairs ; I could see at once that something dreadful had happened."

"Order a peg for me, Wensley, or I fear I shall not be able to go on."

Malcolm poured him out a stiff peg which he gulped down in a second, he then continued :

"We walked into the house and then passed into a bed room. To my horror I saw my girl, who was to be my wife on the morrow, laid stretched on a couch quite dead. Oh yes, I could see at once that she was dead. I only saw her that morning. Her face was then like a rose bud, now it was the colour of marble. I fell on my knees and buried my head in her bosom and sobbed and sobbed like a baby. Mr. Chatterton was standing behind me, I heard footsteps and a voice which I recognised as Mrs. Chatterton's calling her husband away. How long I lay there I don't know. When I awoke I discovered that I was in a lounge in another room. Mrs. Chatterton was sitting alongside of me and as I opened my eyes, she told me that they had found me in a faint and had to remove me, and that the Doctor who came to investigate the cause of Marie's death warned them that it would be serious if I fainted again. I refused however to be treated like a child and walked over to the other room where my darling lay. Oh

Wensley, there is no loss in the world to compare with the loss of a sweetheart on the day before the marriage. What is the loss of a mother or a father, or a wife, compared to such a loss. You knew me before as a very religious fellow Wensley, but I have long ago forgotten God and given up praying, but for some unaccountable reason I every day offer up what I consider to be a prayer. *Oh God spare a man from such a loss as I sustained.*"

"I sat up the whole night by the side of my darling. And as I gazed fixedly on her calm and sweet countenance I imagined once or twice that I saw her smile. For a long time I actually kept my hands on her face and I hoped that I would restore her to warmth and life, but the cruel words of the bible, *Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return*, were ringing in my ears. Wensley, have you ever sat up a whole night watching the dead body of one you love? My God, man, it is a terrible experience, especially in the dead of night when all that you hear is the steady tick tick of the clock, which reminds you that the time is swiftly passing and that in a few hours the beautiful body will be consigned to the earth, for the worms to feed on. And when you touch the stiff hands and cold face and recall the difference when they were pulsating with life, strength, radiancy and beauty, you feel what a mockery life is."

"Tell me Wensley, tell me honestly, is there a life beyond the grave, and in what relation

will I stand to her when I meet her. But, ah me, could I ever hope to meet her. She was a saint, Wensley, pure and devout, whereas look what I am fallen to. I believe nothing of the future. In fact I dare not believe in a future. Drink, drink, man, I must drink, it is the only thing that drives my thoughts from me. Give me another peg, Wensley. It is the only thing that does me good."

Often when Malcolm, in the days that followed, thought of his actions he felt ashamed of his conduct, because he distinctly remembered that he hastily reached over the decanter and poured Musgrave a peg twice as stiff as those he had drunk previously and because twice again during the interview he himself spontaneously poured out drinks for both Musgrave and himself. He was himself unnerved. He felt he must also drink.

"Wensley," Musgrave continued, "I can't tell you everything. Its too much for me but I must tell you this. The day after the death I received a registered letter addressed to me in the handwriting of my beloved."

As he said this he put his hands into his waist coat pocket and pulled out a crumpled piece of paper. "There it is," he said, "read."

Malcolm walked into the hall and unfolded the sheet. The note was written in a clear, bold and distinct hand, but some of the words had been deciphered owing to irregular folds. It read thus.

My darling,

You will get this the day after I die. I am dying by my own hand. I am dying because I love you and cannot—no—I cannot explain why. I enclose a packet which explains to you the reason why I cannot live but I must ask a promise of you. I know you will grant it and as it is the promise to a dead woman whom you loved, so don't violate it. I want you to promise that you won't open the packet until I am dead nine years.

With my undying love to you.

I am

Your unfortunate.

Marie.

After Malcolm had read the paper he folded it carefully, placed it in a clean envelope, and took it back to Musgrave.

"And what about the packet," he enquired, "as he handed him the envelope."

"It is here," Musgrave replied and he indicated his coat breast pocket. "I wish it were nine years to-day instead of only nine months."

"Musgrave," Malcolm said, "you must not give way in this manner. You must pull yourself together and get back to work."

"I can't," he asserted, "and what is more I am afraid I have lost all my money. You see before my marriage I invested all my savings

in landed property. When I lost my appointment two months ago I tried to sell or mortgage the property, but no one would advance me money because there appeared to be a flaw in the title deeds and my ownership was not free from doubt. I consulted a lawyer and he thought it would not be difficult for him to set matters right for me. In fact he told me he was cocksure. He told me, however, that the cost of the suit would be about five hundred rupees. For want of the money I have not been able to do anything yet. I don't seem to have a friend in the world, Wensley."

"Don't say that again Musgrave," Malcolm interrupted. "You shall have the money you require."

"Thank you. Thank you, Wensley. I knew you would do well in the world. Look how fortunate you are. You have the love of a beautiful wife, and whereas you were once before in need of money you are now able to help me. Men like you deserve and get happiness and contentment, Wensley. When shall I call for the money, Wensley."

His remarks were a mockery to Malcolm but how was Malcolm to correct him and what good purpose would be served if he did so.

"Come on Tuesday morning Musgrave," Malcolm said.

It was close on to twelve when Musgrave rose to go; He shook Malcolm firmly by the hand and left.

Malcolm's total liabilities to all parties was close on to two thousand rupees. He had promised Musgrave five hundred. He realised that if he was to keep his name out of the law courts he must, until he obtained his next increase which was due in about six months and which would raise his salary to four hundred rupees, pay a substantial portion of the monthly interest due on the loan from the principal he borrowed. Accordingly he decided to borrow three thousand rupees. The interest on which would be one hundred and fifty rupees a month.

When the Kabul came on Sunday he actually brought about four thousand rupees with him. He did not seem at all surprised when Malcolm told him how much he required. Indeed, he told Malcolm that he expected that he would require as much. On satisfying himself about the genuineness of the insurance policies and the validity of the endorsements, for which purpose he had brought along with him a Bengali Babu, he advanced Malcolm the money and left, remarking as he did so, "Don't bother about the principal, Sahib, but don't fail to pay the interest."

When Musgrave called on Tuesday he was dressed in a clean white suit and showed signs of having taken care of himself. He greeted Malcolm by saying, "Wensley you've put life into me again. I have not had a drink since I left you and if I win this case, as I must, I'll

make a new start in life. I'll never forget your kindness Wensley."

Malcolm handed him the money. "Don't say or think anything more about the transaction Musgrave."

"Indeed not," he said, "here are my securities for the repayment of the loan. You will find in this envelope a promissory note for five hundred rupees with interest; my Will, it is the only security I can give you just now, in your favour, and my precious packet. I am afraid to carry it about with me lest I should lose it. You'll keep it carefully for me, wont you!"

"I'll keep the packet for you by all means, Musgrave," Malcolm said, "but I cannot take the securities you speak of."

"In that case I must return you the money, Wensley."

"Very well, I agree to keep them," Malcolm replied "but you know that I don't require them. Your word is as good as your bond."

"I'm off to Benares to-day, Wensley. The suit has to be instituted there as the property is in that district. I'll wire to you if there is any good news."

Malcolm heard no more from Musgrave. A month later he was horrified to learn that Musgrave had met with his death, in a railway accident.

## CHAPTER VI.

### Oil and Water. .

Nine months later Malcolm received the following letter from his father.

Malcolm, I write to tell you that I have not been successful in securing employment here. Grace and I are going away to Australia to do farming. We have entered into an agreement which entitles us to a plot of land and we shall have to live on the fruits of the soil.

A deposit of five hundred rupees had to be made and Ivan came forward and advanced the money. I am not writing this letter to you to tell you of my whereabouts, because I do not wish you to write to me, but I am writing it because I wish you to see what you are driving me to. The work there will be so hard, too hard indeed for an old man like me, so that you are practically driving me to my grave. To think that I should have lived to see such days. I sacrificed all I had for you boys, but what have I received in return. Nothing, except ingratitude and insults. Stephen, when he was alive, did much more for me than either of you. Why God removed both him and Beatrice and spared his child to be an additional burden on me I don't understand. Do you think you will ever do well in the world or ever be happy after the way



you have treated me and allowed me to be insulted by your wife. Don't be deceived. No man who has forsaken his parents, no matter what they are, has ever been happy. And will not the punishment be many times greater when the insulted parent has been a good and devoted parent to the child. I know more of the world than you do and I know what punishments and sufferings are in store for you. But the greatest of all your sufferings will be that you will be deserted by your wife and what is of more consequence even by God. Although I wish that you should suffer because of your unnatural conduct yet I feel sorry for you in a way, when I think of how great your suffering will be. But you deserve it. You richly deserve it! Keep your money to yourself. Make it your God. See what happiness it will give you. Men like you, who grudge to spend a pice on charity or to help those whom they are bound to help, invariably deprive themselves of all comforts and even of bare necessities. They bank all they have and eventually are punished by the bank failing. May such a calamity befall you. If I were in your place, in receipt of a salary of four hundred and fifty rupees a month, with at least five or six thousand in the bank, and my father was in bad circumstances and without employment, I would send him at least a hundred rupees a month. Don't think I am asking you for any thing. I would not take a cup of water from you.

When I went down to Bombay I could see that Stephen, poor boy, had no place to keep me and that he was fast sinking. I had therefore to live among the poorest. Do you think I was ashamed? No. I was proud that I had it in me to do that instead of appealing to you for help, and even if you sent me any help I would have refused it. But are you not ashamed that you drove your father to this? Where would you have been if I had not sacrificed everything to educate you? Truly, I would rather have seen you a more natural child even if you were a poor gutter snipe. But what was I really to expect from you. You have always been a sneak. In your younger days you used to sneak in and out of the house at night. I said nothing at the time, as I saw that you did not neglect your studies and as I believed that you were not given to anything wicked, but now that I have learnt your true character I am convinced that you must have been up to some clandestine tricks. In a sneaking and dishonourable way you broke off your engagement with Hilda Chapman and in this respect you reminded me of your mother. You are every bit your mother. Sweet tongued but deceitful. Do you think I cannot see the reason! Your prospects were improved and you wanted a fair skinned girl whose father occupied a better position. Poor Hilda! She was too good for you. But she has been spared much unhappiness and suffering and she made a much better match. Her husband is now a captain

on one of the big Steamers that sail between India and England. You are a shifty fellow. You always remind me of calf's feet jelly. And again in your sneaky way you make it appear that you are unable to live on your salary and you do private work and sell tickets at the theatre as if any one with a grain of sense is likely to be deceived. I know why you do it all. It is because of your greedy desire for money. Do you think you deceived me when you told me that the Manager would not agree to my taking your place at the theatre? No, you didn't. I knew it was a wicked lie concocted by you to keep the job for yourself. Do you imagine you will escape punishment? That the vengeance of God will not overtake you? If you do, you are very much mistaken. I shall pray that your punishment will be swift and sure. Not because I am vindictive, but because I am not wholly without feeling for you, and I hope that you may repent of your sins and have time to atone for them. I am too proud to take anything from you, too proud even to wish to hear of, or from, you; so don't attempt to write to me. The letter will be returned to you unopened.

Your ill treated father."

The sad and degrading condition in which Malcolm had seen Musgrave, and his untimely and unhappy death, had had a profound effect upon him, and a great influence on his thoughts at the time, and forgetting his own sorrows

he had once more clung to his old habits and belief. But the firmness of belief in God and trust in His goodness had been severely shaken. He read over his father's letter many times. "Could it be possible," he said to himself, "that the old man actually believes all that he has written? Can he ever think that I would have money in the bank and withhold it from him? Am I really responsible for his having been driven to live where he did? What was Beatrice doing? Why didn't she write and tell me of father's condition? I would have borrowed more money and sent it to him through her. But, no, I am responsible. Why did I not write to her and enquire? Yes, I must be unnatural. Otherwise I should have written to Beatrice and made enquiries. I had no right to suppose that everything was going well. Yes, yes, my father must be right. There must be something unnatural in me. That is why even Martha who loves me so much cannot live with me for any length of time. But what am I to do? Can't some one point out to me where my faults lie? I am ready to do anything to remove them. Is there no good in me? Even some little good that can be brought out and developed. And again his mind became troubled with those harassing thoughts about God. "Why am I being tried so?" he reflected. "Why do these distressing thoughts beset me? No, I will believe in God. I will write to my father and I shall pray to God to make the letter the means of reconcilia-

tion. Only God can do this and when he has done this I shall always believe in Him. I shall never doubt His existence or His wonderful power."

He went at once to his writing table and began to write. He wrote three letters but each in turn he destroyed after reading it for the second or third time. "No," he said, "I have no right to render explanations or make excuses. I must confess and ask forgiveness," Finally he despatched the following letter to his father's address.

My darling Father,

Believe me that I love and respect you and have always loved and respected you as much as any son can a father. I am not, and have never been, unmindful of all the sacrifices you have made for us. Nor can anything ever deface from my memory your kind and sympathetic treatment to us when we were children. For years you were both a mother and father to us. Can I forget that during all those years of hardship and trial you never spoke an angry word to us. It cannot be you, father, that has changed. It must be I. I admit all you say of me. I am an unnatural child, but believe me father that there is some good in me. Don't desert me and disown me. Help me to bring it out. I ask you to believe nothing good of me, except that I love and respect you. Test me, test me, Oh my father, and prove whether I am not speaking the truth. You have

only to command me and I shall do anything to obey you. Did I ever give you a back answer in all my life or fail to carry out your wishes.

With love,  
Your affectionate son,

MALCOLM.

Malcolm waited for a reply in feverish anxiety, but when five days later his letter was returned to him with the endorsement, "Refused," in the handwriting of his father, he once more gave way to those gloomy and foreboding thoughts.

During all these months Martha had never written to him once, but he was well informed about her as he wrote regularly to Mrs. Carpenter and heard from her in reply. Sometimes Gwendolyn wrote on behalf of Mrs. Carpenter. Her letters were always so full of hope and cheerfulness that he often wished he could write to her now and then. This indifference on Martha's part naturally troubled him not a little, and often he felt inclined, to use his own expression, "to chuck it all and clear out." But he had Martha to think of and it was not improbable that his father might yet relent and accept some assistance from him. Moreover, there was the education of Oswald, Beatrice's orphan child, to attend to. And when Malcolm thought of Oswald, he was faced with the question of the boy's future.

Did Eileen undertake to keep him and educate him? It was very good of her if she did, but Malcolm felt that he could not look on and not share the expenses. Indeed it was up to him to bear the larger share as he was comparatively better off than Eileen's husband. He made up his mind to write to Eileen about the matter but put off doing so, from day to day, until he received a letter from Christopher, Eileen's husband.

"Malcolm, I had expected" he wrote, "to hear from you concerning Oswald. Your father left him with me but I distinctly explained that I would find it quite impossible to feed, clothe and educate him unless you helped me. I am only drawing about one-fifth your pay and have the additional expenditure of maintaining a child. And you cannot imagine how dear every thing has become. Good rice is now selling at three measures for the rupee. The rooms I am living in were rented for fifteen rupees a month only five years ago, now the landlord demands twentyfive. With these terrible rises, you can imagine for yourself how far one hundred rupees will go. Of course, I don't wish to make any profit out of you. It will cost any thing between twentyfive and thirty rupees to keep and educate Oswald. Send me twentyfive rupees a month, and if there is anything extra I'll bear it myself. As a matter of fact if you pay twentyfive and I bear five, we meet his expenses in about the same proportion of our pays which seems to

me a fair arrangement. Does it not? Of course, if you think you can do the thing cheaper, you are welcome to send for him and keep him with you in Calcutta. I'll be only too glad. I have enough looking after my own wife and child."

Malcolm knew it was entirely out of the question for him to agree to the proposal to send away twentyfive rupees a month towards Oswald's support. Where was the money to come from? And yet something had to be done, and done quickly, as the boy's education could not be neglected. He did not consider Christopher's proposal in any way unfair. The division of the cost of providing for Oswald in rateable proportion of their respective salaries appealed to him to be entirely equitable. But as he could not afford to find twenty-five rupees which represented his share of the cost, the only alternative was for Oswald to come up and stay with him. Calcutta was dearer than Bombay and yet he felt that apart from personal expenses such as school fees and clothing it would not cost anything more to keep Oswald. What is cooked for two will always be enough for three. He had no intention of asking Christopher to send him five rupees a month, the amount Christopher was willing to spend on the boy's account if he remained on in Bombay. But there was another and important difficulty, he could do nothing in the matter without consulting Martha and obtaining her concurrence. He



had grave doubts about the attitude Martha would take up, but he put them aside. It was an obligation that had to be met and he would tell Martha quite frankly that there were only two alternatives, and that in their best interests he was proposing to adopt the less costly one. He wrote to both Christopher and Martha the same day. All that he said to Christopher was that he was in correspondence with Martha on the subject and that he would write to him again shortly, informing him what decision he had come to. In his letter to Martha he entered fully into the attending circumstances, explaining that one or other of the alternatives had to be adopted, and begged of her to give her consent to Oswald's living with them at Calcutta. Martha replied promptly; "Of course," she remarked, "you are too blind to see that there is a third alternative and that is for Oswald to be sent to an orphanage. If your father is unable to provide for him, that is the proper place for him. You say that it is not likely to cost us seven or eight rupees extra to keep him and pay his school fees. If it costs eight rupees in Calcutta it surely must cost very much less than that in Bombay. I notice that Christopher says it will cost twentyfive. What money grabbers your family are! They are mean to the backbone. But I don't wish to be unkind to Oswald as he is an orphan. Do whatever you like. Now that your father and mother have gone out of India, I shall be very glad to come

back to you. Send me the money at once and I'll return."

On the whole Malcolm was not dissatisfied with Martha's letter. It was out of the question for him to propose that Oswald should be sent to an orphanage. If his father intended or wished that he should be sent to an orphanage he would have got the boy admitted before leaving India. No, it was clearly his father's desire, that he and Eileen between them should look after and provide for Oswald and it was left to him to show his respect for his father's wishes by carrying them out. How else could he ever hope to be reconciled to his father.

At the end of a week Martha and Oswald arrived. Martha was at first extremely agreeable. She seemed to be very anxious to do everything to please Malcolm. She made love to him and in many ways appealed to him as she used to do in the happy and not forgotten days before their marriage, when their views seemed to coincide on every subject. He in turn did all he could to serve her. There was no wish that she expressed that he did not immediately gratify. As a result a whole month passed without a single disagreement. About that time Oswald's first report from school came to hand. It was a very disappointing one. When Malcolm read it, he said, "this won't do, Oswald. You must do better next month. I shall help you with your lessons for half an hour every night and I shall

again examine you in all your lessons in the morning before you leave for school." This conversation took place in Martha's presence. She said nothing at the time, but from the very next day her attitude towards Oswald entirely changed. She neglected his presence and snubbed him on every conceivable occasion. She made him wait for his meals until she and Malcolm had dined as she found, she said, that his manners at table were very decidedly objectionable.

Before a month had passed she beat him twice for trifling lapses in his conduct. On one occasion it was because he left his solatopée in the drawing room and on the second because he dared to order the servant to make him some mustard to eat with the cold meat which was served for his breakfast. As time went on she soon found occasion to slap him every day and if the truth must be told Oswald had latterly become very careless. "If I am to receive punishment I might as well deserve it," he argued within himself. For a time he made great strides in his studies and Malcolm who was feeling the strain of helping him in addition to all his work at the shop and outside, was hoping that it would be possible to leave him to himself, but latterly the boy seemed to have fallen off considerably. He seemed to spend twice as much time at his books, or rather Malcolm required him to do so, but the knowledge he gained appeared to be in the inverse ratio. The cause was not far to seek,

the boy was sulking because of the unkind treatment he was subjected to. But Malcolm was blind to the real cause. He adopted a severe attitude and warned Oswald that if he did not improve by the end of the following month he would be sent to the Government Dockyard to work as a labourer. The reply which Oswald made when he was told this completely upset Malcolm. "Please uncle, Malcolm, send me there to-morrow. I want to work and earn my own living. I shall be contented with bread and water if I earn it myself."

"You are very ungrateful to make such a remark Oswald," Malcolm rejoined.

Four months more passed. Matters went from bad to worse. Malcolm had given up teaching Oswald, partly because he found that it was a waste of time to help him, as his mind did not appear to be on his studies, but chiefly because Martha had on one occasion, when he excused himself from accompanying her to a moonlight picnic, made the remark, "No, don't come with me. You are ashamed to be seen out with me. Stay at home and teach your loving nephew.\* You spend three and four hours on him every day but you cannot go out with me once in six months."

One Saturday evening when Malcolm returned from office Martha informed him quite casually that Oswald had left the house that morning, shortly after breakfast, and had not

returned. "I think he has run away Malcolm, because I gave him a severe thrashing and he had the impudence to fling his penknife at me. It almost killed me, Malcolm. I won't have that lunatic again in the house."

"I am very sorry that such a thing occurred Martha. Please tell me why you beat him."

"I beat him because he deserved it. That should be enough for you. Let him loaf the streets, it will do him some good. You and I are not responsible. We did not turn him out. He has left of his own accord. Come, you promised to go and see Mrs. Wiseacre this evening. We must dress at once. It is already late."

"Impossible Martha, how can you suggest going to the Wiseacres while the boy is missing. He knows very little of Calcutta. Some harm is sure to befall him. What explanation will I be able to render to my father. Do have some pity and consideration, Martha. If not for the boy, for me."

"Fat lot of consideration you have for me," Martha retorted. "When you made the promise to go to the Wiseacres I told Mrs. Wiseacre privately not to expect you as you were sure to back out, since you take a delight in making a fool of me, and in disappointing me, and that you were ashamed to be seen out with me. Why didn't you marry that coloured girl, Hilda Chapman? You would not have

suffered in comparison. You've got too much of the nigger in you Malcolm."

"If you mean that I have something of the Indian in my character, I am not at all ashamed of it Martha. We Eurasians have the mixed virtues and vices of both the European and the Indian. The difference between individuals of our race does not lie in the colour of our skin but in the tendencies which predominate."

"You dare call me a Eurasian, Malcolm! You dare insult me so! My father was an Anglo-Indian. My mother was an Anglo-Indian. How on earth am I a Eurasian. No, I don't belong to that cursed race, thank God, and I didn't know that you did until after I married you. If I did——."

"That's enough Martha," Malcolm interrupted. "Be advised. Don't go too far. Sit down at once and tell me exactly what led to your thrashing Oswald. I must know the circumstances before I go in search of him."

"The postman brought him an indecent picture post card. Instead of declining to receive it he actually laughed with joy. I was watching him very closely Malcolm. He is a villain, young as he is. I asked him to show me the post card, but he refused, so I thrashed him. and the impudent rascal had the cheek to throw his penknife at me. My word, I did mark him. I broke your malacca cane on him. He won't forget me in a hurry I am sure. There, I can't stand here the whole

day satisfying your curiosity. I am going to the Wiseacres myself. If you won't find the time or the pleasure to take me out I shall soon find some young fellow who will. Only then you will be brought to your senses, but it will then be too late, I warn you."

"Go and do as you please, Martha. I am not in the mood to enter into foolish discussions with you. Many a man has shot his wife for less than what you have said just now, but I know that you are a good girl, only you have a violent temper. So I am not in the least bit angry with you. But do go away. I must think what I am to do to find the boy."

"I hope you won't find him Malcolm. If you do, please don't bring him to the house. If you bring him to the house I shall leave you."

Malcolm was very troubled. He knew that Oswald had made no friends in Calcutta and could not therefore have gone to any one's house. He might be on the maidan or in the Eden Gardens, and Malcolm remembering that Oswald had a bad temper and was also hypersensitive feared that he might have drowned himself in the Hooghly. One thing he was likely to do and that was to get away to Bombay to Eileen but how was he to do this without money. However, Malcolm resolved that if he was unsuccessful in finding Oswald by nine that night he would go to the Railway

station, peradventure the boy might be bold enough to attempt to make the journey without a ticket. His search on the *maidan* and in the gardens proved abortive. He was present when the Bombay Mail left that night but Oswald was not to be seen on the platform or in any of the compartments of the train. He walked the length and breadth of the European quarter of the town, and foot-sore, famished with hunger, and thoroughly faint and exhausted he returned home at three in the morning. Martha opened the door for him.

"Nice time this is for a respectable married man to come home," she cuttingly remarked.

"Please leave me alone Martha," Malcolm pleaded, "I have much to think of and much yet to do. The boy has not yet been found."

"Did you drag the river, Malcolm?"

He left her, walked into his room and shut the door behind him.

He threw himself on his cot, but it was not to sleep. His brain was very busy trying to devise what means he should employ to discover the whereabouts of the lad. Suddenly he jumped up, "Yes," he said, "I know it now. There is no God. If there was one, such things would never happen. Much as I dislike the publicity and disgrace I must lay the matter in the hands of the police; but I won't make a formal complaint at the police station. I shall first see Inspector Wittenbaker privately."



Malcolm had met the Wittenbakers at the house of one of his friends, Dr. Matesky. Inspector Wittenbaker was a typical Scotchman; shrewd, keen and close. He spoke very little, but did a great deal. He had a wonderful reputation and all who knew him prophesied a great future in store for him. Mrs. Wittenbaker was an exceptionally kind and sympathetic woman, and, added to the virtues of her character, she was a recognised beauty. She was envied by all the ladies and admired by all the men of the set in which she moved. Even Malcolm was no exception. He admired her, but more for the beauty of her character and the kindliness of her disposition than for anything else.

It had barely struck six, when Malcolm knocked at the Wittenbaker's. The bearer opened the door and informed him that the *Sahib* and *Memsahib* were dressing to go to church; if he would sit down they would see him presently.

"Tell the *Sahib* not to hurry," Malcolm said, and he threw himself on a sofa.

In five minutes both Mr. and Mrs. Wittenbaker entered the hall together.

"A visit from you and at this early hour is an agreeable surprise to us Mr. Wensley. I do hope nothing is wrong."

"I am afraid everything is very wrong, Mrs. Wittenbaker. Indeed I have come to consult, or to be more correct to make a report

to Mr. Wittenbaker in his official capacity as Inspector of Police of this division. Our friendship is my excuse for calling at your house, Wittenbaker. If possible I should not like the case to be recorded in your station books."

"Must I leave Mr. Wensley," enquired Mrs. Wittenbaker?

"No, not at all," said Malcolm. "Indeed it is just possible that, with the proverbial instinct which women—no ladies—" he said correcting himself, "have in such matters, you will be able to suggest a clue."

Inspector Wittenbaker was a trifle offended at this remark. No such a thing as instinct came within the science of his methods of detection.

"Look here Wensley," he said rather sharply, "is the matter very urgent or can it wait till I come back from church."

"It can certainly wait," said Malcolm. "I'll call again about nine," and he turned to go.

"Dearie," said Mrs. Wittenbaker to her husband, "you must not let Mr. Wensley go. Can't you see that he is suffering mental agony. Another two hours of suspense will kill him. We intended to walk to Church. I'll send for a gharry. This will give us about ten minutes."

The Inspector gave a low grunt. He did not relish the idea of spending twelve

annas unnecessarily. It would pay for a peg of Dewar's White Label. But he could not possibly refuse to meet his wife's entreaties.

"Inspector Wittenbaker," Malcolm said, "you are no doubt aware that I have had living with me for some little time a nephew of mine a lad of eleven years. Owing to a trifling fault of his, Mrs. Wensley beat the lad yesterday. This occurred shortly after breakfast. From that time the boy has disappeared and although I have done everything to find him I have been unsuccessful. Can't you help me, Wittenbaker? The lad knows very little of Calcutta. He is sure to come to harm."

"What is the lad's temperament and habits," enquired the Inspector.

"He is of a very submissive disposition but hot tempered. He is over-sensitive and smarts under chastisement. I don't think there is anything unusual in his habits. He is just the ordinary sort of boy. I am not aware that he is the victim of any particular vice. Indeed I believe he is quite a straight fellow."

"That's enough, Wensley. But sit down at that table and write a brief but clear description of the lad's appearance and I shall do my best to trace him."

Malcolm did this, handed the note to the Inspector and left, after informing them that he would call again after breakfast to enquire if any clue had been obtained.

When he went there at noon, he was surprised to find Oswald, quite fresh and clean, sitting in the drawing room and talking to Mrs. Wittenbaker.

"Mr. Wensley," she remarked as Malcolm entered, "Arthur was not long in capturing your run-away nephew, but as you see he is very happy. The truth is we are going to keep him for a little time if you will only consent. He has told us his story and I am sure he has stated it very fairly. I cannot trace any vindictiveness in him. Won't you consent to his remaining with us? It will only make matters worse for all of you if you take him back just now or indeed at any time. Leave him with us until you are decided on something more definite."

"Please do consent uncle Malcolm," said Oswald.

"How ever am I to do so Mrs. Wittenbaker. Why should I shift on to you who, forgive me for saying so, is almost a stranger to me, the responsibility and expenses of keeping the boy? No, I cannot, Mrs. Wittenbaker, much as I would wish to. Please let him return with me. As you say it will be bad for the three of us. But I cannot agree to obligations and responsibilities being set aside merely because bearing them leads to annoyance or suffering."

"You are very stupid Mr. Wensley. Please regard us as your friends. At any rate let the boy be here for a week or two, and we can

then again discuss the matter. Now don't think me rude, but get home at once and have some rest. You have been doing too much yesterday and to-day. And in the evening, please send Oswald's things over. Don't forget his school books."

Malcolm stood up. He felt strangely moved by Mrs. Wittenbaker's kindness. How much she reminded him of Martha before their marriage. Why had Martha changed so? In what way was he responsible for the change?

When he returned home, Martha questioned him immediately.

"Well; have you found that vagabond and loafer?"

"Yes, dear, I am so glad I have and, would you believe it, Mrs. Wittenbaker has taken him in and is going to keep him for a little time."

"Why did you go to Mrs. Wittenbaker's without consulting me? You know I don't like that creature, Malcolm."

"I did not go to her."

"Don't tell me a lie, Malcolm. If you didn't go to her she could not have come to you. The cook told me this morning that when he was returning from the market he saw you going towards Park Street."

"Yes, but—"

"Shut up, Malcolm, why don't you be a man and confess that you are in love with Mrs. Wittenbaker? How ever you men see

anything in that big, fat, coarse creature I can never understand. I suppose you are deceived by her appearance of kindness and her deceitful tongue."

"Martha, you have no right to speak of Mrs. Wittenbaker like this."

"Haven't I. Can't I see through it all. You are in love with her and, wicked creature that she is, she wants to bring you down to her disgraceful level by making you her slave. She knows that if Oswald stays there you'll go there every day. Do you know how mean she is? she sells her old clothes and boots and hats and whatnot. And she had the cheek last month of sending them to me and drew special attention to some of the blouses. It was all pure wickedness, Malcolm. If I had a figure like hers I'd shoot myself."

"You are not yourself Martha, otherwise you would not say such things. Go and lie down. You must be tired after going to the theatre last night."

"I'll not leave you until you promise that you will never go to that cursed woman's house. I know that you are truthful and will keep to a promise."

"How ever can I make such a promise Martha?"

"Well if you don't I'll go to Mrs. Wittenbaker's. Not now, but some time when she has friends and I'll say everything that I have

said just now and I'll disgrace both you and her and I know many other things about her too and I'll spit them out."

Malcolm did not know what to do. He made the required promise but mentally resolved that he would not keep it. He knew that this would mean that he would have to be deceitful and tell a lie. He felt thoroughly ashamed of himself and was not so sure that after all when the time came he would not speak the truth. He did not feel any qualms of conscience in having to break the promise he made. Martha had no business to extract such a promise from him and under such a threat. But he would have to tell a lie. How was he to do it. He imagined that he could avoid Martha's enquiries about the matter if he went to see Oswald during business hours or on his way to or from the shop. But when he found that Martha made it a point to ask him every night whether he had been to see Mrs. Wittenbaker he realised that this plan would not work. As a result every time he went to see Oswald he told Martha a deliberate lie. He felt ashamed and degraded on the first and second occasions he did this but subsequently he lied as a matter of course and without compunction.

'It is in the best interests of everyone,' he said to himself. 'There is no sin in doing so. Of course I shall do so only in my relations with Martha, because if she ever finds out I can

easily explain to her that I did so in her own interests, and what is more, some day when things are brighter and they must be brighter, sooner or later, I shall tell her myself that I did so.'

Oswald remained on with the Wittenbakers for six months. Mrs. Wittenbaker wanted to keep him longer but her husband, who was averse to the proposal from the beginning, raised an objection on the score of the additional expense they were being put to. But Malcolm had not allowed the Wittenbakers to do everything for Oswald. He had paid his school fees and made him an allowance of twelve rupees to meet other personal expenses. When Mrs. Wittenbaker told Malcolm of her husband's decision she expressed her sorrow at having to part with Oswald. "If I had my own way I should keep him with us until he grew up to be a man, Mr. Wensley, but my husband's wishes must prevail. He never likes anyone about the house and even in this case he has acted splendidly in allow me to keep the lad for this short time. What are you going to do for the boy?"

"I shall have to take him back to my house, Mrs. Wittenbaker. I fear the results, but what can't be cured must be endured."

"You must not do anything of the kind, Mr. Wensley. You cannot mix oil and water. He has an aunt in Bombay, why don't you send



him there, or why don't you put him into a good boarding school?"

"I cannot afford to pay more than ten or fifteen the utmost on his account Mrs. Wittenbaker. So putting him into a boarding school is out of the question. I must put him into some cheap boarding house for the present and write to my sister Eileen as regards his future."

Old Mr. Wensley had died within a year of going to Australia. His wife returned to her people in Secunderabad. Malcolm felt that in duty bound he should go and see her and enquire about the last moments of his father's life. Mrs. Wensley, who was dressed in her widow's weeds and felt quite proud of them, refused to shake hands with Malcolm when he called on her. "I am glad you have come," she said, "your father cursed you on his dying bed and he asked me to write and tell you that he did so. By coming here you have saved me the worry of writing to you."

Malcolm bit his lip, turned on his heel and walked away.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### The Club.

About a year or so after she had returned from Bombay, Martha one morning volunteered the statement that she was quite tired of continually calling on people and inviting people over. "Apart from the strain on one's health it is a great strain on one's purse Malcolm," she said. "I have recognised this for a long time, but I hadn't the courage to drop out of my set, but a good opportunity is at hand just now. Mrs. Wiseacre has taken a big house in Wellesley street and is forming a club for respectable ladies and gentlemen. She and her husband spoke to me about the matter yesterday and convinced me how much cheaper it would be to spend one's evenings at the club. Besides one must benefit by the outdoor exercise in playing tennis and badminton. Of course I told them to put both you and me down as members, and I put your name down for fifty rupees as an initial donation towards the formation of the club. Now say you thoroughly approve, Malcolm, of what I have done. And by the way, Malcolm, you will be delighted to hear that Mr. Cochrane is to be the Secretary of the club."

"My dear Martha," he replied, "I certainly have no objection whatever to your belonging

to Mrs. Wiseacre's Club. She is a very respectable lady. As for Mr. Cochrane there is no man I dislike more than him. I also have no objection to your action in having included me as a member as I suppose it would not look well if only you joined. I should have liked to have been spared so large a contribution as fifty rupees, but as it is too late to remedy matters I shall be pleased to pay the money, but there is one point I must refer to. When we were boys my father repeatedly told us never to join a club or to go to a public restaurant. He condemned the former most vehemently. They are, he used to say, Satan's man traps. Most men learn to drink and gamble at clubs and even if they do not fall a victim to these or worse vices as a consequence of their environment and bad companions, club life is invariably a life of dissipation which sooner or later undermines one's health. I cannot say that I agree with my father. I have not had the experience to agree or disagree, but he was a man of common sense and ripe judgment and I hesitate to go against his wishes. At any rate in respect for his wishes I should like to be excused from going to the club. But this does not mean that you need not go yourself if you wish to."

"How stupid of you Malcolm. It is just what it does mean. It is impossible for me to go there unless you accompany me occasionally. Otherwise people will talk and I shall have to

give up the club. Besides isn't it prudent to avoid being talked about. I would fancy that any man worth the name when he was old enough to marry would consult his own feelings and wishes and those of his wife and not of his father. He cannot always remain a child. You only take up this attitude because you are by nature disagreeable and your chief desire in life is to oppose me. I know what you are longing for. You want to provoke a quarrel and force me to leave you again so that you can have your fling. Mrs. Cochrane was telling us only the other afternoon of the pranks that husbands are up to when their wives are away. Most of them, she told us, pose as bachelors and take girls out to the theatres. Not that I suspect you of having done anything like this up to the present, but if you again drive me to leave you I shall have no option but to get you watched during my absence."

"Don't let us have any unpleasantness Martha," he replied, "I am always open to compromise. I shall make it a point to show my face at the club for an hour or so every Saturday afternoon. I hope this will suffice."

"Admirably; provided you don't behave like a bear with a sore head."

Before she retired that night Martha came into his bed room. "Malcolm," she said, "you made a remark this morning about Mr. Cochrane. I have been trying all day to think what you meant, but cannot understand. I

have always found Mr. Cochrane very nice, and he is so fond and loving to his wife. What a pity that she should be crippled and unable to move about. She is so young and so childlike. But isn't she getting stout, the want of exercise is robbing her of all her beauty."

"If you have a good opinion of him, Martha, I am sure I have no desire to bias you. My conclusions are based on hearsay and circumstantial evidence. I may be quite wrong. Some other time I may tell you, but not now. Perhaps you may see for yourself. You are always very cute."

"A nice way of snubbing me, Malcolm. Keep your knowledge or views to yourself. I don't believe you have any. You only made that remark to get me to change my mind about joining the club. Your conduct, however, has only succeeded in making me all the more determined to join."

But Malcolm did know a great deal about Cochrane. He knew for certainty that taking advantage of his wife's position, Cochrane was making love to a young girl neighbour of his and that matters were going a bit far. If there was one thing that Malcolm condemned, with all the vehemence he could, it was unfaithfulness on the part of a husband or wife. "No matter what the circumstances were," he would often say, "no husband or wife should ever be unfaithful either in thought or word or deed. They take one another for better or

worse and they've got to make the best of their lives." There was no one Malcolm despised more than one who was unfaithful. And that was why Malcolm disliked and despised Cochrane.

Five rooms of the building were allotted to the club. One a drawing room, one a ladies room, one for the bar, and the last was the card room. It was understood that ladies were not admitted to the last two rooms. Malcolm had not been to the club more than three or four times when he discovered that the chief attraction was the card table. All sorts of gambling games were played. Brag was most common. Next in popularity was Poker. Nap was seldom played and Auction Bridge was only very occasionally indulged in and then at very high stakes. The games, especially Poker, fascinated Malcolm considerably. He would sit for hours and watch the others play and he soon recognised that he was more than a match for most of them. But he had resolved never to gamble and he resolutely refused to take a hand on every occasion that he was invited to do so. Gradually all the members understood that he was not given to gambling and no one asked him to join in. Sometimes he would go to the club on a Sunday night after dinner to watch the game and it was on such occasions that he noticed how much cheating or unfairness in play took place. There were generally two classes of players, one which invariably won at the start though

moderately, but lost heavily towards the end of the game and the other which fared conversely. The former were the honest and straight fellows, the majority of whom could not play without their drinks and who were soon too unsteady to notice the perpetration of little tricks of sleight of hand etc. The others were the "teetotallers" who invariably won a tidy sum every night. Most of the latter were men without definite employment who lived by their wits, principally in playing cards and billiards and in betting on the race course. Now these very teetotallers were men who, when they were not engaged in a gambling venture, were as free with their drinks as the most confirmed drunkards. Malcolm had been quick enough to make a note of this when it occurred at one or two of the public dances to which he went with Martha.

A common feature of the brag table was combination play by which the third player was sandwiched between a very good and an indifferent hand and led on much above the value of his hand owing to the natural disinclination on his part to be the first to throw up. Again with the practice of turning the cards face upwards, Malcolm had seen players place their cards in such order as to ensure their obtaining a *certain* hand after a given number of deals. The operation was a very simple one, especially when three persons only were playing and the lower cards up to the sevens were taken out. Working on this

certainty—say a high run—the holder would back his hand on the *blind* for ten or fifteen rupees and one of the green-horns, holding a pair, would plunge in up to fifty or sixty rupees and when he lost, console himself with the cry, “Damn lucky fellow to get a run on the blind. Never mind, such luck must come to me some time ;” but it never came.

But the game that lent itself to most unfairness was Auction Bridge. The more Malcolm saw of the unfairness that took place the more firmly he resolved never to gamble. He deplored having joined the club. He felt that he would have been better off if he had not seen such things. There were, he felt, certain experiences of life which were not worth having.

Malcolm never drank at the Club but he occasionally called for drinks round. This usually happened when one of the other members offered him a peg and replying that he never touched liquor, he would be chaffed by the remark, “good way to avoid treating others.” Most of the members were put up to make this remark by Cochrane. He often told the other Committee members, “we’ve got to catch Wensley. Once let him take to drinking or gambling and the financial success of our club is assured. The fellow is very well off. He is drawing in all about five hundred rupees a month.” Five of the other members of the Committee expressed their entire agreement with this



view, but one, a young man by the name of Peterson, protested. "We have no right," he said, "to lay a trap for any one. It is decidedly mean. Knock me off the Committee from to-morrow."

Peterson was as great a gambler as any one in the club, and although he never got drunk he took as much to drink as most of the others. He was a true sportsman and Malcolm admired his sportsman-like spirit and fairness in play. He was not a fool and he was never taken in by the sharp tricks of the others.

At a later meeting of the Committee, Cochrane explained that he had a scheme in view to inveigle, (he was very fond of using this word), Wensley. "We must," he explained, "let him run up bills and not trouble him for payment until the amount outstanding against him is fairly large. That will work very well."

For only one reason did Malcolm feel glad that he joined the club. It was because one of the members gave him news concerning his twin brother Charles. The information he received was that Charles was working as a librarian in the Institute at Allahabad. Malcolm told Martha of the good news he had received and the very next day he wrote to Charles enquiring of his welfare and expressing the wish that he would run down to Calcutta at an early opportunity. Charles answered the letter in person, very much to Martha's annoyance. He explained that after

he had been dismissed from the College he could not face his relatives and friends. He left Bombay immediately and knocked about from place to place, doing work even as a groom, until two years ago he had obtained the appointment he held at Allahabad. "I was only getting fifty rupees a month, Malcolm, and as I heard from Mr. Cochrane that you were very well off I knew you would not mind keeping me for a little time until I got something to do in Calcutta," he said.

"Certainly not," Malcolm readily replied, 'you are welcome at any time and for as long as you like. Only in your own interests it would have been better if you secured another appointment first. What have you in view?'

Martha got up and walked out of the room without excusing herself. Charles inferred that she did so considerably in order to allow them to discuss matters more freely, but Malcolm knew that it was the sign of a storm.

"I want to get into the Calcutta Police, Malcolm. You see I'm well built. I'm fair. I know a good deal of medical matters and will be useful in *post mortem* cases. I believe that the Police Department grab up *ex-medical* students. Do you know any one who would help."

"Yes I think I can get you an introduction to the Deputy Commissioner. He lives in the same hotel as Mr. Hathaway of my firm."

It was four months before Charles was able to obtain employment but long before that he left them as he soon found that his presence in the house was disagreeable to Martha.

After the club had been running for a year a general meeting of the members was called to elect office bearers. The election was by vote. Malcolm was unanimously voted the President of the club. The election was met with uproarious cheering which never seemed to end. His election was a direct result of the knowledge that he held a fairly good position and in consequence of the popularity of Mrs. Wensley among the men. But no one ever attempted to be familiar with Martha. They knew her better than to try to, but they always found her "game for fun," and she was very happy in the knowledge that she was greatly admired by the men. When silence was restored Malcolm stood up and asked to be excused. He gave no reasons. All eyes were turned expectantly to Mrs. Wensley. She got up from her seat and walked over to where Malcolm was seated. No one heard what she said but in an instant Malcolm stood up again. "Ladies and gentlemen, 'I withdraw my objection."

"I think you should stand drinks round Wensley," shouted Cochrane. "It is a great honour to be elected to so high an office unanimously. The like of it has never occurred in any other club. It is unlikely to ever occur again in this club."

Malcolm nodded assent.

"Let's all drink a bumper," said Cochrane, "to the prosperity of our Club and our President."

The President was *ex-officio* a member of the Managing Committee. Each member of the Committee was required to remain in responsible charge of the club for one day in the week. This meant his staying on from after dinner until the doors of the club were closed. It was understood that the doors of the club were to be closed at twelve midnight, but this rule was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Frequently the club was closed only at the dawn of day. When Cochrane, who was elected Secretary of the club, asked Malcolm what day he would like to do his turn, Malcolm who had no other day spare, replied, "put me down for Sunday." A few years back Malcolm would have considered it a grievous sin to spend his Sundays in what was practically a gambling den; but now things had changed. His belief in a personal God was a thing of the past. He was more or less an agnostic.

A large number of the members being present an impromptu concert and dance was decided upon. Malcolm enjoyed the concert at which "Peg, Peg, Pegging At The Bar," and the "Good Rhine Wine" were sung in great gusto by all the men present.

Martha remained on for the dance but, fond as Malcolm was of dancing, he had to leave for his work at the theatre. On his way out he met Peterson. Peterson drew him aside, "Wensley," he said, "I am very sorry you accepted the office of President. Be very careful of yourself, you are not the sort of man who should take up this job. Keep your eyes open old fellow."

"Why, what's the matter Peterson," Malcolm enquired. "Everything seems alright except that a few of the players are not very fair in their play but as I will never gamble there's no danger; besides if I can prove their cheating I'll soon clear them out."

"There's more than that Wensley. In the first place this is not the club for a married man. Then there's too much drinking in this club. Although I like my drinks and a bit of a gamble I must say that clubs like this are the ruination of many fellows. It will be the ruination of Henderson for instance. You see the club's not registered and there are no Rules and Laws. If you want to see a good club which is run on excellent lines and affords all the necessary amusements without the slightest risk of bad results take a trip to Simla and see the Catholic Club there."

"Thank you Peterson I shall not forget what you have said but so far as I am concerned I am not a bit afraid of myself."

"Just a minute, Wensley. What made you join this club."

"Why," enquired Malcolm.

"Because, it is the last thing you should have done. There are quite a number of respectable clubs in Calcutta, any one of which would have suited you. This and at least another twenty more like it are concerns that are established by Cochrane and his friends. As soon as they have done all the necessary fleecing here the club will close and open out somewhere else."

"Thank you once again, Peterson, but I don't think I'm the sort of fellow that's easily fleeced, but I'll warn Henderson."

Henderson was the only son of his parents. His father had died a few years back and left an immense fortune to his widow. Young Jack Henderson was his mother's idol. Nothing was too good for him. Nothing he could do was ever wrong. He lived in the neighbourhood of the club and it was not long before Cochrane persuaded him to become a member. He joined the club because he wanted to play Auction Bridge. He was an excellent player but this was only when he was sober. Unfortunately for him he was too fond of his drinks. He would, whenever he sat down for Bridge, invariably win handsomely at the commencement. After he had five or six drinks he would become quite reckless. His one desire then was to play the hand. To

gratify his desire he would overcall. Four Clubs over Three Royals was an ordinary call of his. Nothing would stop him. His partner's only consolation was the hope of being his opponent on some other occasion.

One Sunday when it was close on to twelve o'clock and when he was three sheets in the wind, Henderson came over to Malcolm and said, "I say Wensley, do make an exception and play a few hands for me. I don't want to go home just yet, nor do the others, but I am feeling a bit squiffy. I'll lie down for a minute or two and be alright again."

"I'm very sorry I cannot do so Henderson," Malcolm replied, "I have firmly resolved never to gamble."

"You won't be gambling," said Cochrane, "whereas if you don't oblige you'll be spoiling good sport. Don't be selfish old man."

Cochrane had touched a weak spot. Malcolm never liked to be accused of selfishness. Moreover he knew that Henderson was already much out as a direct result of his intoxication and he hoped to pull back a little on his account.

"Very well," he said, "I'll make just this one exception."

"Bravo Wensley," the others cried, led by Cochrane. "We knew you were a good sport otherwise we should not have elected you President of the Club."

It was wonderful how well Malcolm played. He was on the left of Cochrane and he found it possible to double his call at every deal. At the end of three rubbers he had won thirty five rupees for Henderson. Henderson on hearing the good news got up and approached Malcolm and tapping him on the back said. "Play for me for the remainder of the night, Wensley. I dropped ninety five rupees yesterday. I am yet out to day, I must pull back something to keep me going for the next few days. I can't ask mother for large sums of money every day."

Malcolm continued to play for him until the party broke up, which was at four in the morning. He had won fifty five rupees for Henderson.

As Malcolm walked home that morning he was severely tempted. The temptation presented itself to him in this form. "You are heavily in debt, why not gamble in cards. You are bound to win two or three hundred rupees a month. What a relief it will be to you to be clear of your debts"; but he thought of the wishes of his father and set aside the temptation.

But there were yet two very severe trials in store for Malcolm. Three years previously he had stood surety for one of his friends who had borrowed two hundred rupees from a Marwari. Malcolm had asked his friend now and then if he was clearing the debt and was assured that



the interest was being regularly paid. Imagine Malcolm's feelings when the Marwari called at his house one morning and told him that the interest had not been paid for fifteen months, and as the other *Sahib* had no intention of paying, a suit would be filed, unless Malcolm paid the interest and principal due, before the end of the month which was only a fortnight hence. The amount due was five hundred rupees. Malcolm was troubled as he did not know how to get the money. The Kabuli would not give him anything more. He could not afford to go elsewhere and borrow at a high rate of interest. Much as he disliked it he would have to go to a friend. He had very few real friends. Finally he decided to apply to Henderson. He met Henderson the next day and told him of his misfortune. "Come along at once to my mother," said Henderson. In twenty minutes Malcolm had the money in his pocket. Mrs. Henderson would not hear of taking any interest from him. The arrangement came to was that he should repay the loan at the end of twelve months.

The other calamity came about in this way. Remembering Peterson's warning, Malcolm enquired at the first monthly meeting of the Committee when the accounts of the club were last audited.

"Good gracious," said Cochrane, "who ever heard of the audit of the accounts of a

small club like this. I'll publish a monthly balance sheet if you like."

"That won't do," interrupted Malcolm, "there must be a regular audit. The members must appoint their Auditor. I'll call a meeting for the purpose soon. In the meantime I'll conduct the first audit myself. Day after to-morrow is a holiday. I'll come over and audit the accounts. Will you have everything ready by then Cochrane."

"They are ready for you now if you want to look into them," he replied.

Malcolm found the accounts correctly kept. All Receipts were properly accounted for and all Expenditure, except minor contingent charges, were supported by proper vouchers. But the Club was not in a sound financial condition as almost every one was in arrears with their bills. As he looked into the details of the outstandings Malcolm gave a start.

"Surely Cochrane," he stammered, "there is something wrong here. It is preposterous. man, I cannot surely owe the club one hundred and fifty rupees."

"I have unredeemed vouchers amounting to that figure," Cochrane replied, "would you care to go through them."

"Yes, bring them here."

The sweat was standing out in great big drops on Malcolm's forehead. "These rooms

are frightfully hot," he remarked as he went through the slips all of which bore his signature or initials. He totalled them and found that the outstanding figure in the accounts was correct.

"You have not treated me properly Cochrane," Malcolm remarked, "why didn't you tell me my bill was running up? By the way, this is awful, I see Henderson owes three hundred rupees. What does Peterson owe?"

"Nothing," Cochrane replied.

"That's better," said Malcolm. "Look here Cochrane you must send out bills regularly every month and if the outstandings against any member are more than fifty rupees no more credit should be allowed to him. We must not allow young fellows to ruin themselves. I see there is a charge of nearly two hundred rupees payable by us for wines supplied. I happen to know the proprietor. If you give me fifty rupees from the funds of the Club I'll square the bill. You can therefore remove my name from those arrears."

"A very good idea Wensley. Here's the money, fifty rupees, and here's 'the wine bill.'"

After he had completed his audit Malcolm walked into the Card room. It was full. Nine men were playing at Poker and six at Brag. Malcolm never felt the temptation to play stronger than on that day. He had spent, yes needlessly spent, one hundred and fifty

rupees in this accursed club, in supplying drinks to these unthankful fellows. Why should not he make them bear a portion of the charge by winning their money from them. He had fifty rupees in his pocket, a thing he never had for he did not know how long. He would try his luck.

"Give me a hand please," he said, as he sat at the table.

Cochrane who was standing behind him suppressed a smile and walked away.

"I have caught him at last," he muttered. "He'll make good fry."

Malcolm played on till three in the morning. He forgot his home, he forgot Martha, he forgot his dinner. he forgot the Press and he forgot his work at the theatre. But he was not sorry. He had won a hundred rupees. Why should he slave in reading proofs and in selling tickets at the theatre when he could earn a hundred times as much and yet enjoy himself? "No," he reflected, "I'll try my hand again a few more times and if I am successful I'll take to it permanently and chuck the other businesses."

"Why are you so late Malcolm," Martha enquired as she opened the door for him when he returned home.

"I am sorry dear but I took a hand at cards and forgot all about the time."

"I object to have to get up for you at this unearthly hour, Malcolm. Its bad enough to

do so once a week, but that's duty. Don't ever come home late again."

"No dear, goodnight."

"Come here Malcolm. I heard the jingling of money in your pocket. How much did you win."

"About a hundred rupees, Martha."

"Come on," she said, "give me fifty. How mean of you, Malcolm, you should have given me half without my asking you, but I'll punish you, I'll take the whole hundred this time and the next time you win you can take all."

She went up to him, put her hands in his pocket and took every rupee out. She counted the money at once. "What a liar you are Malcolm, there are a hundred and forty eight rupees here. How deceitful you are."

"Not at all dear, fifty is the club money. It is required to pay a bill."

"Here take it," said Martha, "and you may have twenty five to play with and win more. We'll soon be well off at this rate. Won't we Malcolm?"

He made no reply.

It was with the greatest difficulty that Malcolm was able to get the proprietor of the Wine Establishment to agree to transfer the outstanding debt against him, receiving rupees fifty down and the balance in monthly instalments of twenty five.

The following Sunday when Malcolm was on duty at the club, he took a hand at Brag. He again had very good luck and won about thirty five rupees. The School did not break up till half past five on Monday morning. Martha was very annoyed with Malcolm but she was somewhat appeased when he shared his winnings with her. Malcolm felt quite tired that day and was quite unfit to get through his work. He had to excuse himself from the Press in order to have a nap before going to the Theatre Booking Office. He recognised that night that it would be quite impossible for him to keep his work at the Press and the theatre if he took to playing cards and sitting up all night, so he resolved never to play again. But when Saturday came round and Cochrane sent a chit to him to be sure to call he hurried away to the club in advance of Martha and without invitation sat at the card table. He purposed playing up to seven and to then getting away for dinner and thereafter to the theatre. At half past six he was out by twenty five rupees. He had commenced with forty rupees. At five minutes to seven he was left with only three. The temptation to stay on and win back his losses was too great. "I'll play till half past eight," he said to himself, "and go direct to the theatre. I'll get a drink and a few chocolates there. They should keep me up." In five minutes more he lost another ten rupees. Not having the money to pay the pool he was about to get up

when Cochrane stretched his hand across. "Take these, Wensley, you can send the amount over in the morning." Malcolm had caught the fever of the gambler. Cochrane had given him forty rupees. He played recklessly and lost time after time. In another half hour he had only five out of the forty left. Every time he dropped four or five rupees he would call out for a peg. Once again he forgot about Martha and his work at the theatre. When the School broke up at five on Monday morning he was so drunk that he did not know how much he had lost. In fact he did not know whether he had lost or won. Peterson seeing his condition led him home. Martha was quite disgusted to see him brought home.

"Leave him there in the hall on the floor Mr. Peterson," she said, "he deserves nothing better. The next time he is like that I shall lock him out."

It was with great difficulty that Malcolm got up in time to go to work the next day. His head was splitting, and he felt quite sore in his stomach.

Cochrane was waiting in his room at the shop. When Malcolm saw him he felt inclined to throttle him. "What the devil do you want," he demanded.

"Wensley, whatever is the matter with you. Look at these I. O. U. slips. Do you know

you lost one hundred and twenty five rupees. in addition to the forty I gave you."

"Show me those chits," said Malcolm.

He thought that he had been tricked. But the chits were all genuine.

"My God," he said, "whatever shall I do. How soon must I pay?"

"It is usual to square up within a week," said Cochrane. "But there is no reason to fret. We are playing every day. With care and fair luck you should clear all these."

"But how am I to play? I haven't a cent on me."

"I'll advance you another thirty five. That makes two hundred in all."

"Thank you," said Malcolm. "I'll be there to-night at any rate."

He wrote to the Superintendent of the Press excusing himself for a week. At dinner he was hoping for an opportunity to tell Martha that he had lost heavily and that it was imperative that he should play again. But Martha herself opened the conversation.

"Malcolm, I searched your pockets last night. There was not a pice in them. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Not only have you lost all the money, but you were actually drunk. I wrote in to-day resigning the club. O God, what is my lot that I should have married a drunkard and a gambler? Don't ever go near that club again Malcolm. If you



do I shall kill myself. Promise me Malcolm that you will never enter that club again. It is all that wicked man Peterson's doings. He was just as drunk as you last night."

"Don't say any more Martha. I promise you dear I shall not go to the club again."

Malcolm really meant to keep the promise. He tidied himself after dinner and left for the theatre. As he entered the office room the Manager met him and drew him aside. "You will find a month's pay in that envelope, Mr. Wensley. We have made other arrangements."

"Keep the money," said Malcolm, and he walked out of the building. He was too proud to ask why his services were dispensed with or to take money he had not earned.

The blow was a terrible one to Malcolm. How ever was he to meet all his expenses and these card and club debts on a reduced income. "No," he said to himself, "I know what to do. I will play cards for the next seven nights. Not a day longer. I'll make Martha believe that I spend the nights at the theatre. At the end of a week when I have cleared these debts I'll tell her all and ask her forgiveness."

In another ten minutes he was at the club. He played up to twelve o'clock and then hurried home. He had won twenty seven. He felt quite pleased with himself and was more firmly resolved to practice this deception on Martha for a week only.

But when the end of the week came and he was still one hundred and twenty two rupees to the bad and had to borrow the money from Peterson to pay up, he knew that he could not stop. Not only must he play in order to win and clear his debts but he simply could not keep away from the Card table. It was impossible for him not to acquaint Martha with the fact that he was not now working at the Theatre. After much consideration this is what he told her. "Martha, a gentleman friend of mine who is making a collection of old books has employed me as his agent. I have no other time so I will have to get about after dinner two or three days the most in the week. Most of the collections are in the northern part of the town."

"I am very glad Malcolm. What increase in your income will it mean."

"How can I say Martha. I will get a commission on what is supposed to be the difference between the price I pay for the books and what they are worth."

"I hope you'll make a lot Malcolm. I've been feeling very run down of late. This summer, or next, the latest, I must take a trip to Darjeeling. Try and make a lot Malcolm. Don't hesitate to keep out a whole night if necessary. I'll not mind. Most of the other ladies are going to some hill station this year. Only I have to stay back. Don't you feel for me."

Malcolm played regularly at the club two days in the week. He would play till the early hours of the morning and then get to office with hardly a couple of hours' sleep. The more he played, the more deeply he became enslaved. As time went on he won regularly and he was able in addition to clearing Peterson and the Wine Merchant to give Martha one hundred rupees for her birthday.

Malcolm had very few friends. The only persons whom he knew were his friends at heart, were Dr. Matesky, Peterson, Henderson, Mrs. Wittenbaker and Miss O'Rourke. The latter was a young lady who lived with Dr. Matesky.

Malcolm liked Miss O'Rourke because she was so sensible and genuine. Whenever he went over to Dr. Matesky's place he would have animated discussions with her on various subjects; ethics, etiquette, religion, sport, and a thousand and one other subjects were all discussed in turn. Malcolm would always tell her that she had the brains of a man, and she used to reply that she felt proud of it. One day in the course of a discussion she said, "Mr. Wensley, why is it that all marriages are a failure? It's all one-sided. The women give up so much and the men nothing."

Malcolm looked at her and then at Mrs. Matesky.

"Oh what a clever man you are Mr. Wensley," she said. "I didn't mean to include

Dr. Matesky's and your case. Of course I know that Dr. and Mrs. Matesky and you and your wife are quite happy, but I am talking of all the others."

"I am afraid Miss O'Rourke that I don't quite follow you. Who has put this idea into your head?"

"Well, during the last year not less than six widows have all told me that their husbands were real brutes. Took all they could get out of them and left them penniless."

"I am sure you will admit that there is another side to the case, Miss O'Rourke. You haven't heard the husband's side, but then, few husbands ever complain."

"Don't you think, Mr. Wensley, we had better stop this conversation," interrupted Mrs. Matesky and so the matter dropped.

As time went on, playing for two days a week didn't satisfy Malcolm. He explained to Martha that if he was to earn more he would have to work more. He spent all the time at the club. Often when he went home on such nights and Martha opened the door for him, especially if he returned after playing Bridge, he felt, due to his meanness and deception, like the Jack of Clubs, and little Martha who came up only to his shoulders appeared to him as the formidable Ace of Spades.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### Almost debased.

Malcolm was on his last legs so far as decency went. He spent almost every night in drinking and gambling and frequently never went to bed at all. Consequently he had no time to attend to his clothes or his toilet. Martha would do nothing for him. He had it in him to pull himself together or at least he thought so, but even if he did steady himself what troubled him was how he was to discharge his debts. If he did not discharge them his creditors would soon put him into court and attach his salary and this would lead to ruination and disgrace. He was something of a mathematician, but how it could be possible to manage to meet charges and expenditure amounting to close on six hundred out of a net income of four hundred and fifty odd was a problem he was unable to solve. He referred the question to a few of his more learned friends but they could not get any nearer a solution than he. His debts amounted to three thousand rupees approximately. This in itself was not so large, but the interest was so exorbitant that Malcolm knew that he would never be able to repay any part of the principal. He could not very well borrow more. He would not beg or steal or what is tantamount to stealing obtain anything by unfair or dishonest means. For instance it was quite

possible for him to receive considerations for appointments made on his recommendation. The only honourable way which he saw of making money was by winning it at the race course, or the card or billiard table. His winnings at cards were considerably more than what he actually realised. There were always disputes about the scores and like all other second class clubs of the kind to which he belonged a certain proportion of the players were defaulters. They belonged to the class who moved about from one club or gaming house to another, receiving their winnings but never paying their losses. He was in a knowing set as regards the races, but not being able to lay out much could never make anything much out of a win. And besides anyone who is a regular punter knows that the sure tips often mean a sure tip to drop money. On the whole he was very little to the good after meeting the usual expenses including the cost of drinks. He was very clever at billiards which led to his being severely handicapped in pool and snookers. So here also he could not pick up much. But he was exceptionally good at Auction Bridge and Brag. When he had the cards in his favour he made the best of them. When the cards were fairly equally divided he invariably came out top dog, but not even he could play against cards, and there were times when he lost heavily. It was on these occasions that he would drink more than was good for him.

The harassing thought of how to raise the money to pay his losses made him feel desperate and he sought for consolation in the bottle. But it was not on such occasions that he kept out late. No, whatever else Malcolm was not, he was a sportsman. When he was a loser he would get up at the time agreed to close and leave the club unless there were others prepared to commence some other game. But if he was winning, Malcolm would never get up until his opponents did. It was this that kept him so often in the club till the early hours of the morning.

On one occasion he returned home at five in the morning. Martha opened the door for him and told him that she was going to leave him for good. "I almost suspect you of playing cards." She said. "You are not a man Malcolm. You are a weak-backed woman. Do you never think of me. But bah, to think that the likes of you can protect me. I tell you, Malcolm, that if you don't give up the life you are leading, I will either leave you for good or take up with some young fellow. If you will find your own pleasures, I must find mine."

"You know Martha as well as I do that I have to keep out at nights to pick up old books."

"Don't lie to me Malcolm, who will be up at this unearthly hour to sell books? Confess you have been to the club."

"Excuse me, Martha, if it had not been

for your persistent entreaties I should never have joined the club."

She sniffed. "Just like Adam, putting the blame on a woman. I might have persuaded you to join the club, but I didn't teach you to drink and gamble and who knows what else. No good man ever stays out a whole night even if he is looking for books. The next time you are out I'll come to the club and see if you are there. I suspect you are up to some other game."

Malcolm lay low for a little while but one Thursday evening, a few weeks later, on his way home, he met Henderson in the car.

"Hallao, old man," said Henderson. "Aren't you going to the club this evening?"

"No," replied Malcolm, "I am going home. Why, is there anything special on?"

"Yes, there's going to be a big School this evening. Just for a few hours. Five to eight. Come along old fellow. There'll be heaps of sport and lots of money to pick up."

Malcolm felt the need of picking up some money. It was nearing the end of the month and Martha had told him in the morning that she would want a few rupees more to manage till next pay day.

"Sorry I can't come," said Malcolm, "I have no money with me."

"Don't let that keep you back. Here's fifty. You can return it to me in the morning."



Malcolm succumbed to the temptation, but he realized that he must get home before dinner or the cat would be out of the bag. Martha would soon find out where he had gone to.

At ten minutes to eight he was winning close on to a hundred rupees.

"Only ten minutes more," said Cochrane, who himself had pulled in more than seventy rupees.

"Look here," said Henderson who was the biggest loser, "Cant we keep this going till the morning."

"You'll have to play without me," Cochrane demurred, "I have an appointment at half past eight."

"Oh, you may go," retorted Henderson, "we wont miss you," and then turning to Malcolm, he pleaded. "Wensley you'll stay, wont you old sport? The others will if you do."

Most of the others chimed in. "Yes, do stay, Wensley. Let's make a night of it."

Malcolm felt that he could not refuse Henderson. He didn't care about the others. For a few minutes he didn't reply. He was thinking out a scheme to put Martha off the scent.

"Yes," he replied. "Certainly I'll play, but please keep me out for a round or two, I'll go

home and return immediately. My wife will be expecting me home for dinner."

He hurried home and asked Martha's permission to go to Chandernagore, where he explained he would be able to pick up a good bargain. "I would have gone on direct from office Martha," he said, "but after your remarks of the other day I felt that I must get your permission."

"Please go, Malcolm, I didn't seriously mean all I said that day. I was so upset. But wont you have some dinner."

If I have dinner I'll miss the train, he explained and he hurried out.

Shortly after he had resumed play, Mr. Burn another of the players asked to be excused for a second. I must write to the Missus he remarked.

"My darling wife," he wrote.

"I have had to get away to Sara this evening quite unexpectedly. Something wrong at the river there. Don't be anxious about me. Send my breakfast to the office tomorrow morning."

Yours ever,

Wilfred."

He put the letter under a cover and addressed it to his wife.

He then wrote another letter to one of his office Babus, whose address he happened to remember. "Take this letter to my wife" he

wrote. "Tap the door and when she comes out hand it to her and walk away. Only say that you are a clerk of the office and that I gave this to you to deliver to her."

Having completed the letter he called the club bearer and directed him to the house of the clerk. He then resumed his seat.

In less than an hour the whole club was upset by a Babu running into the Card room.

"Sir," he cried addressing Burn, "something catastrophe has happened."

"Look here you idiot," Burn shouted, and he banged the table with his closed fist as he spoke, "talk lower. What is the matter?"

"Sir, when I gave Memsahib the letter, she read it and then damn it, Sir, she called me chaprasee and say me why didn't you bring this at five o'clock."

"And what did you say in reply," enquired Burn in a meek voice as by this time he was trembling in his knees lest the Babu should have told his wife the truth and that he was at the club.

"Sir, I am your honour's faithful servant, I have faithfully served the Company for thirty years. These last three years I have had no increase of salary, everything is get dear, Sir, and last month and then another baby was born for me."

"Stop all this Babu. What did you tell Missus?"

"Sir, I am a faithful. I making no reply to my mistress, and then Sir, something happened. She became very angrified Sir, and kicked me and called me lazy beggar for not bringing the letter at five. I am not a beggar Sir. Sir, your honour, I am not to blame. This fellow," and he pointed to the club-bearer, "must have delayed the letter. He brought me only half an hour ago, Sir. I know he was a lazy Sir, and so I asked him where your honour was," and then turning to the bearer he yelled in Bengali "you lazy and unfaithful wretch may the Gods strike you and all your children dead."

"I believe you Babu, you may go home."

"Your honour please be merciful to me and consider my increment. I have a dozen and one children to boot, please note."

"Speak to me about the matter in office to-morrow Babu. I'll do something for you. But take care your family does not increase in the interval."

Burn felt that some explanation of what occurred was due to the others and he told them the truth. There was a general roar of laughter.

"Not as good a bluff as Wensley's," one of them explained. "He's mad on old books and is supposed to go round the whole of Calcutta at night in search for bargains. His silly wife believes everything he tells her. It's surprising to me how easily some wives are

bluffed. It's good to know these dodges. One may require to play them sometimes."

The School broke up at ten in the morning and Malcolm went direct to his office. He worked till one and then drove home.

"What's the matter Malcolm?" enquired Martha. "Why have you come home? You are not looking well."

"Yes I am not feeling well," he explained, "I had to sit up the whole of last night in the station waiting room. I haven't had a wink of sleep Martha, the bugs wouldn't let me. Now leave me like a good girl and don't wake me on any account."

Three days later which was the first of July, Malcolm went to see Dr. Matesky on some business. The Doctor was not at home and Mrs. Matesky insisted on his having a cup of tea before he left. Miss O'Rourke and Mrs. Wittenbaker were present. Malcolm had hardly sat down when Miss O'Rourke tackled him.

"Mr. Wensley," she enquired, "where were you last Thursday night?"

"In the Wellesley Street Club, gambling at cards," Malcolm replied.

"And what did you tell your wife pray?"

"I told her, as I always do on such occasions," said Malcolm, "that I had been looking out for old books. But how do you know all this Miss O'Rourke?"

"That doesn't matter. One of your friends told me the story. Mr. Wensley do you remember the last conversation we had?"

"Yes, Miss O'Rourke, perfectly."

"Well after you left I told Mrs. Matesky that your action in looking at her which also meant, *please look at me*, was a complete reply to my side of the case. I felt converted to your view that the advantages and disadvantages were on the whole pretty equal, if a fairly large number of cases was taken. But when I heard to-day that a man like you, whom I always held up as an ideal husband, actually practiced deception on your wife, I reverted to my former opinion. My only hope was that when I questioned you in the matter you would be able to tell me that I had been misinformed. But that you have not been able to do."

Mrs. Wittenbaker then chimed in. "Mr. Wensley, do you know that I would forgive anything in my husband except deception. Once let him deceive me and I am finished with him for ever. I would not live with him for a moment thereafter."

Malcolm was taken completely by surprise. He had never fully realised the heinousness of his offence. He remembered that the first time he deceived Martha was in order to see his nephew Oswald when the latter stayed with Mrs. Wittenbaker. He simply had to do it. The excuse was not so strong in connection with his nights out at cards. But

what was he to do. He had to play to help to meet the interest on his debts, and if he told Martha, there was no hope of his being permitted to do so. He had always satisfied his conscience by saying. "Well, it is for Martha's good, and so it must be done." But now he realised also that they were in part due to that insatiable desire in him to gamble. While he was yet in thought Miss O'Rourke stood up.

"You may shake hands with me now for the last time, Mr. Wensley. For the future I do not wish to know you."

Malcolm looked her full in the face and with unflinching eyes. He was not ashamed to do so; and from her he turned to Mrs. Wittenbaker. He expected her to say something. But she dropped her eyes and toyed with the food in front of her.

Malcolm was about to tell them that they were judging him without any knowledge of the circumstances. He wanted to repeat the words he once read in a book. *Man sees the deed and God the circumstances* but on reflection he quietly withdrew without even wishing Mrs. Matesky. "Why should I excuse myself;" he said, "it makes no difference. I am accused of the sin of deception. Of that I am guilty. Nothing can alter the fact that I am guilty. But there is one thing I am determined to do and that is never to deceive any one in future. No matter what the

circumstances may be. No matter what the consequences are."

He went home direct. Martha was out. She came in just in time for dinner. They sat at the table side by side.

"Well, have you been anywhere, Malcolm?"

"Yes, dear, I dropped in to see Dr. Matesky. I had some business with him."

"You wicked brute," she cried, "I know why you went there. I drove past Kyd Street this evening and I saw that creature. You know who I mean, that creature Mrs. Wittenbaker, go in there. So this is how you see her. This is why you so frequently have business with Dr. Matesky.? Do you meet her there every-time you go there."

"Whatever is the matter with you, Martha? What has upset you dear?"

"Upset me. Your disgraceful conduct of course in hanging on to that woman. I'll upset something on you presently. Answer me, how many times this week you have seen her?"

Malcolm hesitated in replying. He didn't like the look on Martha's face. He wanted to be quite accurate. He made a mental calculation and then answered, "I last saw her two months ago, Martha."

"You liar," she snapped, "and upset her soup on his clothes. There I hope that will upset you."



He was about to give utterance to a blasphemous imprecation but he checked himself in time.

"It does Martha, because you have spoilt the only decent suit I have; otherwise I should have a good laugh. Your behaviour is amusing."

She sprung out of her chair and struck him on his face. "Get out of my sight," she cried, "or I'll kill you. You deceitful wretch."

"I will," said Malcolm and without another word he left the house. He felt he must go to the club. It was his only refuge. If he was called a deceitful wretch when he spoke the truth he might as well earn the name.

On his way to the club he came face to face with Mrs. Wittenbaker. He took off his hat but she turned her head in the opposite direction. This had an unsteady effect on him. Notwithstanding her remarks that evening he believed that she was of a merciful and forgiving disposition and that she at least would not cut him. He had no hopes of ever getting into good graces again with Miss O'Rourke, but he did not for a moment believe that Mrs. Wittenbaker, who had so much more experience of the world, and who should have understood the position he was placed in, would make him pay the full penalty of his misdeeds.

At the club he drank heavily and as he could not in consequence keep his wits he

lost quite a large sum. At half-past eleven most of the players rose.

"Look here," said Malcolm, "surely you are not going to break up. Let's play till the morning."

"I'm game," said Henderson, "at any rate let's just have one more rubber, only one more, only one more, please."

"Don't you know that this is the first of the month, Henderson, and that we are due to see the girls."

"What girls?" enquired Malcolm.

Six or seven of the players to show their disapproval got up and walked out of the room. One or two in joy danced a waltz.

"Come along old sport and we'll show you," broke in Cochrane. "It's ripping fun."

"Right oh," replied Malcolm, "I'm game for anything to-night. I'll visit the devil if necessary."

Peterson came up to Malcolm and touched him on the arm. "Wensley," he said in a low tone intended only for Malcolm's ears. "You are not yourself to-night. Come away with me. You will think better of this in the morning."

"If you dare to insult me Peterson. If you dare to insinuate that I am drunk and don't know what I am doing, I'll make you measure your length on the floor."

"Leave him to me, Wensley," interrupted Cranenburgh. "I know how to dispose of these interfering fellows. Look at my chest, man. Have you ever seen a chest like that before? And look at my muscles, damn it. Have you ever seen anything like them before?"

Now Cranenburgh was a crank; when he was in a pugilistic mood he was a difficult man to tackle. He asserted the view that he was the only man in Christendom who was entitled to stick his chest out. If you wanted to get Cranenburgh into a stew you had only to stick your chest out in his presence. Nothing would ever wipe out such an offence in his eyes.

Malcolm made one of the merry half drunken party that drove that night to see the girls. While they were half way down Marquis street Malcolm enquired where they were going to and on being told he stopped the carriage and got out. "No," he said to the others, "I draw the line at that."

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## CHAPTER IX.

### **The Reaction.**

Nature will never be played with. She has no sentiment, she makes no allowance for circumstances. Malcolm had been going too fast for a long time. He was beginning to feel the strain. After that eventful night when he almost felt he could never quiet his conscience. He longed to confess to Martha, to tell her everything and to ask for her forgiveness. But Martha was at all times so distant and cold that he could never make a beginning to speak. Just about that time something went wrong in the firm. Everyone concerned except Malcolm shirked responsibility for the error. Malcolm admitted his share and suffered in consequence. His salary was reduced by thirty rupees a month and he was told he should not expect any further increase of pay. This upset him considerably and for days together he could not sleep. As a direct result of his troubled mind and the want of sleep, his health soon broke down. He lost his appetite and his springy walk was a thing of the past. Martha watched him closely. She knew that his health was failing him but as he never complained of feeling ill she made no enquiries about the matter. "It will do him good," she said to herself, "if he is laid up for a time. He'll soon stop playing cards, buying books

and keeping out at nights." She did not realize what it would mean to Malcolm to go on sick leave on reduced pay. She knew he was in debt but she had not the slightest inkling of the extent of his debts. To spare her anxiety he had never told her, and she was not sufficiently interested to enquire. It appeared to him that all she wanted was sufficient money to manage the house. As he found it difficult to sit up at nights and play cards, Malcolm took to betting more heavily on the races. But here he met with indifferent success. His small winnings were swallowed up in expenses.

In a very short time it became necessary for him to go and see a doctor. He went to one of the leading physicians of the town, only to be told that nothing was the matter with him. This was not suprising considering that all that he was able to tell the doctor was that he could not get sleep. Not being satisfied with such a verdict he went from one doctor to another, but although he spent quite a considerable sum, close on to a thousand rupees, the whole of which he had to borrow from friends, he was not one bit the better. On the contrary he grew worse from day to day. By the end of a year all that he was able to do was to attend work and to take to bed as soon as he reached home.

One of the experts whom he consulted gave the following verdict.

"You are suffering," he said, "either from

mental anxiety which in itself kills more people than all the diseases together in the world or from a nervous break-down, or not improbably from both, as the second is a corollary of the first. You are the best judge as regards the former and you must make the most conveniently profitable arrangement to remove the cause of your anxiety or trouble if your illness is due to these causes. It is not for me to suggest the means. No two cases are alike but, speaking generally, I would say that if you have troubles which are weighing upon you and you see no way of overcoming them confide in some near relative or good friend. Someone who thoroughly understands your position, who will respect your confidence and who will at any rate give you wholesome advice. It is impossible for doctors to remove mental anxiety but unless it is removed disease of one or more of the vital organs must necessarily follow. All I can do is to direct my attention to your nerves."

He treated Malcolm for a month but without result.

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## CHAPTER X.

### **The Necromancer.**

Notwithstanding Malcolm's very indifferent health, Martha was determined that they should have a full and merry house for Christmas. He begged of her to let them spend the day quietly, explaining that anything in the nature of noise or argument tried his nerves very seriously ; but all his pleadings were in vain.

"It is because you have none of your family anywhere near that you wish to deprive me of the pleasure of entertaining my friends," she remarked.

When she took up this attitude he invariably let her have her own way. Accordingly she invited about twenty people to spend the day with them. The party breakfasted at about eleven and had hardly got up from the breakfast table when a man peeped his head in at the front door of the house and shouted, "fortune teller Memsahib, very good fortune teller."

Miss Ray, a spinster of nearly forty summers, but who dressed and behaved as if she was still in her teens, jumped up and exclaimed, "oh, Mr. Wensley, do let him come in and tell us our fortunes."

Malcolm knew that of late Martha had taken a great dislike to this class of men as she had repeatedly, introducing the subject herself, expressed her views very strongly, but he felt that he could hardly refuse the request of a guest. "After all," he said to himself, "it is only an innocent amusement and Martha is not likely to become disagreeable as she would understand that I consented in deference to the lady's request."

He signalled to the man to come in and directed him to Miss Ray. To show her disapproval Martha excused herself on the pretext of having some household duties to attend to and withdrew to her bed room followed by an old widow who, it was known, veritably hated fortune tellers because one of them had foretold that her married life would be a very short one.

The man had very little to tell Miss Ray, but he told the fortunes of each of the others in turn. Most of the guests were struck by his power of thought-reading and ability to answer questions concerning their past. He worked out or pretended to work out the answers on a piece of paper. His *modus operandi* was to draw a diagram similar to the "tick-tack-to" played by school children, to ask certain questions such as the date of one's birth and initials of one's names, and to make his calculations on such *data*.

The man told both good and bad fortunes,



and did not adopt the usual procedure of telling all the spinsters that they were soon to meet the men they were destined to marry and that their husbands one and all were to be handsome, rich and good-natured, and to be fair of face and to have blue eyes. He very pointedly told Miss Ray that the greatest desire of her life was to marry a rich man, no matter how old or ugly he was, but that she was doomed to live and die an old maid.

He had scarcely finished with Miss Ray, when Mrs. Canning the wife of a covenanted engine driver who had been out in the country only four years stretched out her hand to him.

"Memsahib," he said, "I find it very difficult to read your future, but I can see clearly that within two months you will receive a few thousands of rupees and go away to England."

"Oh how happy that will be Edward," she said, turning to her husband, "if it turns out to be true."

"What I say must come to pass Memsahib. I never guess. For instance there are many matters in your hand but they are not clear, and I might make a mistake, so I don't guess. I am a very good fortune teller Memsahib." Having made this latter remark for the twentieth time he drew out a book from a bag he carried with him and invited his audience to read his certificates.

Every one looked at the book. It contained certificates from Rajas and Dewans and Private Secretaries to Lieutenant Governors. All testified to his remarkable power of thought-reading and many of them spoke of the excellent performances he had given in necromancy and sleight-of-hand. When Malcolm read the certificates he welcomed the opportunity of changing the character of the performance. Addressing the man he asked him to show them some of his sleight-of-hand tricks. Malcolm did not believe that anything the fortune teller could do was more than sleight of hand. But the tricks performed were really suprising.

When the fortune teller had performed about a dozen tricks, Malcolm paid him a couple of rupees. The fortune teller took the money tied it in the corner of his *dhoti* and looking at Malcolm very keenly said, "Sahib, you don't believe in fortune tellers?"

"I must confess that I don't," Malcolm replied.

"But Sahib, there are certain who are gifted in this respect and I am one of them. Most of the men, who knock about claiming to be able to tell fortunes are great humbugs, Sahib. They spoil the reputation of men like me who are specially endowed with this wonderful gift by the Gods. I have much to tell you, Sahib and I feel that it would not be right if I left your house without giving you certain warnings and directions. But I know that

you will not believe me, Sahib, unless I first prove my ability by telling you certain important facts concerning your life, both as regards the past and the present. Why, Sahib, to begin with I can say most definitely that you are saying to yourself now, "I wonder if the fellow can tell me whether I shall ever be well again and if so how soon I shall be quite fit to get about as I used to before."

Malcolm could not help but readily admit that the man had correctly read his thoughts.

"Now, however," he continued, "I'll prove to you that I am no fraud, tell me when you were born, Sahib."

"The 15th April 18—" Malcolm replied.

"Were you born in the morning or the evening Sahib?"

Malcolm stated he did not know definitely but that he understood that he was born about six in the morning.

"Very good, Sahib, I will tell you one principal event connected with your life during each of the past ten years."

Malcolm again had to confess that in every case the fortune teller singled out the most important event in each year. He told Malcolm the year in which he was married, the year in which his father died, the year in which he fell into bad habits, and almost to a day the first occasion on which Martha had struck him. The way in which he referred to this

event was "Much anger and *goolmal* with Memsahib on this day, Sahib."

When he had finished this he asked Malcolm if he was satisfied that he was no fraud, and Malcolm somewhat reluctantly admitted that he was.

"Now Sahib," he said, "I must tell you about your health. Will you please, Sahib, go to your bath room and wash your hands quite clean and come back.?"

Malcolm did as he was requested and resumed his seat.

The man was quite three or four yards away from Malcolm and did not touch him or look into his hands. He asked Malcolm, however, to show his hands to all the others so that, as he explained, they could see that his hands were quite clean. He next requested Malcolm to close his fists.

"Now Sahib," he said, "a great deal depends on what is going to happen to your hands. If your sickness is due to ordinary causes it will soon leave you. In that case a palm tree will appear in your left hand but if, as I suspect, you have been conjured you will find a scorpion in your right hand. Please open your hands now, Sahib. First the left and then the right."

Malcolm opened his left hand. There was nothing on it, but on opening the right, he saw quite distinctly in the middle of the palm in dark Indian ink the figure of a scorpion.

“Sahib, Sahib,” cried the fortune teller, “show it at once to only one or two around you and close both your hands again quickly. A great misfortune has befallen you.”

The fortune teller began to intone certain prayers and subsequently fell into a deep sleep in which state he remained for quite five minutes. His attitude was causing anxiety to some, and not a little impatience to others, and Malcolm was about to call out to him when he awoke and with a bright and beaming smile said, “Sahib I have found out everything. There is no mistake. For a small cost I can do you plenty good. I must explain, Sahib, in the first place that you have been conjured by a lady, the wife of a person who is well known to every one here, Sahib. She is the wife of your worst enemy, she has done this, Sahib, because you would not make love to her and she wants you to make love to her. When she found out that you were stubborn Sahib, she like hated you though not really, Sahib, for she love you; then she employed a man, a wicked fellow, not like me, not like me, Sahib, who is always doing good to people, and brought this calamity upon you. But she will surely suffer tenfold sahib. I am great man sahib, believe me, believe me. If you will give me one hundred rupees, and much money I will spend in your presence, Sahib, I shall transfer this sickness of yours to that lady and she will suffer the torments of hell, Sahib.”

"What do you want so large a sum as a hundred rupees for," Malcolm enquired.

"I want two goats for sacrifice, Sahib. And I must feed one hundred Brahmins, Sahib, and I must perform ceremonies for three days together, Sahib. Only then the Gods will hear my prayers."

"And supposing I do not do what you say," Malcolm asked.

"Then Sahib," he said, "you will suffer untold of agonies during the next twelve months, at the end of which time you will die Sahib, unless, yes Sahib, I foresee one escape, and if you give me twenty rupees I will tell you what that is. Everything depends upon the Gods, the stars and the spirits of the dead. You are passing through very bad time, Sahib. But this one thing will only save you from death, Sahib, you will always suffer, sometimes more, sometimes less, but suffer, you must. Hear me, Sahib, I am not a fool fellow."

Miss Ray interrupted at this stage. "Mr. Wensley," she said, "you have the reputation of being a clever and practical man. You were telling us this morning that you have spent about a thousand rupees in consulting doctors about your illness and not one of them has been able to tell you what you are suffering from or to do anything to relieve you of pain, give you sleep, or arrest the disease. I speak of a disease because you cannot in my opinion possibly have pains and discomfort without some specific

disease. What are diseases after all but discomforts. After having spent a thousand rupees, what is a hundred? Why don't you risk it, what does it matter if the man is a fraud? Personally I fully believe that this man is correct and if you have any scruples, I know it cannot be anything else but that, as no reasonable person would withhold the expenditure of a hundred rupees to obtain health, especially if he has had the means to have already spent ten times as much. I believe in the man in spite of the unkind things he has told me. He speaks the truth at any rate. I am convinced of it. For years all other fortune tellers, who have read my hand, have been telling me all sorts of pleasant things, and not one of them have come to pass. Here I am, getting on to twenty five" (some of the other ladies actually felt a sudden draft of cold air at this moment and could not help coughing), "and I am still unmarried. The man is no fraud, Mr. Wensley. If you have any scruples permit me to make an investment on your behalf; if it succeeds you can repay me, otherwise not."

"Memsahib is very kind," said the fortune teller, "I will study her case more fully; there may be some good for her and at all events I can tell her how to avoid dangers."

Most of the other guests urged Malcolm to accede to the man's request.

"There can be no doubt that there is much in what Miss Ray says, although her logic is

'frightfully at fault," remarked Professor Shires who was the Head Master of the Bengal Orphanage and who was looked upon as an authority on all subjects.

Malcolm never took any important step in life without consulting his wife, and he said so. "I consider this an important step," he remarked, "not the spending of the hundred rupees but the possibility of transferring my sickness in a tenfold degree to some one else. Besides I know that Mrs. Wensley discourages these men, and quite rightly, because, as this man has told us himself, the majority of them are frauds. If Mrs. Wensley had seen this man's performances she might have been disposed to believe in him, but as she has not I think she will not agree to his proposal."

"Oh leave the matter to me," said Miss Ray, and she bounced out of the drawing room in search of Mrs. Wensley.

"I tell you these fellows are downright frauds Miss Ray," Mrs. Wensley was saying as they returned to the hall. "Now what did he say about my husband."

Miss Ray repeated with remarkable accuracy all that had transpired.

Mrs. Wensley completely lost control over herself. "You devil," she said addressing the fortune teller. "Did you tell my husband that he will only live for a year."

"I am a true fortune teller Memsahib," was all that he replied.



"If you don't get out of this place at once I'll give you a hundred kicks you devil," Mrs. Wensley shouted at him.

"Don't be angry so Memsahib. Before you agree to perform the ceremony, which will cost only one hundred rupees, but as it will surely save Sahib's life it is worth a thousand, I will prove to you that I am a true fortune teller. If the Memsahib will bring me a clean sheet of paper and put it into this jug I will show the photograph of the lady who has conjured Sahib, and I will also show in a picture the one thing that will save the Sahib if he does not perform the ceremony. Be advised, Memsahib. The Sahib is a good man and I seek to save him and I am a good man and a good fortune teller. I am no fraud Memsahib."

Mrs. Wensley rushed at him and kicked him on his shins and shouted at him, "get out you devil, get out."

"Memsahib be warned, Memsahib be warned. It is better much for you that I should perform the ceremony and your husband should be quickly well than that he should die or the other thing should happen. Be warned Memsahib. Be warned. I am a true fortune teller, see my certificates please Memsahib. Ask this lady," and he pointed to Miss Ray.

But his entreaties only enraged Mrs. Wensley all the more and she rushed at him again and kicked him violently. He stood up and she

pushed him with all the force she could command, with the result that he fell backwards on the floor and sustained an injury to his head.

"Leave him alone Martha," Malcolm interrupted. "You have no right to strike the man. He came in here at our invitation and if we want him to leave we have only to tell him politely to do so and he is bound to do so," and turning to the fortune teller Malcolm asked him to leave.

"Sahib come with me to some other house and I will show you your one means of escape. Only twenty rupees Sahib. Be advised Sahib."

Martha rushed again at the man. She looked almost a lunatic as she did so. "I'll kill you if you don't get out of this house at once," she cried.

Malcolm stopped her and called out in a commanding voice to the man to go away at once.

"How dare you stop me," Martha yelled out and before any one was aware of what she was about to do she slapped Malcolm across the face. Malcolm felt humiliated to be treated in this way in the presence of his wife's friends. But he was a man of a calm temperament. It was extremely lucky that he was, otherwise it would have been very bad for Martha as any one may imagine. The ladies were quite shocked at Martha's behaviour and some of them expected a violent scene to follow. But

all that Malcolm did was to address Martha thus in a perfectly cool and collected manner.

“Martha, this is the third time you have raised your hand to me. I have let your conduct pass on the two previous occasions, and I shall let it pass on this occasion also, but I shall never again forgive you Martha for a similar offence. If you dare to lift your hand again to me or even threaten to strike me, you shall regret it for the rest of your life. Come, Miss Ray, let us have some music. I feel quite ashamed for what has happened, especially as it has happened with no justifiable cause. I apologize to you my friends, I sincerely apologize for this unpleasant scene, but I beg that you will all forget it and let us spend the rest of the day happily.”

By this time the fortune teller had left the room, but immediately Malcolm had finished speaking he called out.

“Sahib it is impossible for the ceremony to be performed, but I shall offer my prayers and mantras, Sahib, that you will find the other means of escape.”

Martha had walked into her bed room and did not hear what he said.

The rest of the day passed uneventfully. It was nearly midnight when the guests began to take their departure.

Four of the guests were going in the same direction. When they were a sufficient distance

from the house, the conversation naturally turned to the fortune teller.

"How very awkward that Mrs. Wensley behaved in that manner," remarked the Professor. "One would almost imagine, nay not imagine, but draw the inference, that she was the party who conjured him. But with the careful study I have made of the characters of different classes of men and women and of their behaviour in definite sets of circumstances, I am forced to the conclusion that her behaviour though apparently strange is but the natural exposition of her frailty. She is weak minded and hysterical. I am quite sure of it."

"And I am equally sure Professor that if she heard what you said just now you will soon find that although her mind is weak her legs are strong. But I entirely agree with you most learned Professor in describing Mrs. Wensley's conduct as most outrageous."

"I am not aware that I said anything of the kind Miss Ray."

"Yes, yes, but you meant it Professor which comes to the same thing. How cruel of you to interrupt me. You men will never give a woman a chance to speak. But how splendidly Mr. Wensley behaved, so like the man that he is. You know I quite believe every word that man had to say. All that is required of us is to have patience for twelve months. Next Christmas day if Mr. Wensley is alive I shall go to him and try to find out what

was the one means of escape. I am so curious about it."

"I am quite sure you are wrong Miss Ray, in believing that man," said Mrs. Fleixster. The man is a juggler, nothing more. That is why he performed his principal tricks in a jug, except perhaps that he was able to do a little thought-reading. We will all be better off if we think no more of this matter. Necromancy is a cursed profession. The man deserved the castigation he received."

Malcolm spent a restless night. The predictions of the fortune teller kept his brain very busy. At times he was almost inclined to believe that the man was correct in ascribing his disease to witchcraft. He had heard of the exercise of this evil influence in the case of others and he recollected that the craft was reported to have been practiced as far back as the time of Moses. But Malcolm loved life. He was not afraid to die, but he wanted to live. Who is there that really does not want to live? Only the broken hearted and the disappointed. He hoped he could meet the man again. There would be no time for the ceremony, but he would pay the twenty rupees and find out the other means of escaping death. He had grave doubts, however, what he should do and after mature deliberation he decided to apply to the Professor for his advice.

Early next morning he was at the Professor's house. He called early as he was aware of the

Professor's habits and he hoped to be able to obtain definite advice as quickly as possible in order to be able to trace the fortune teller, in case he was advised to consult him again.

"Good morning," said the Professor, as he entered Mr. Shires' sacred study. "What brings you to me at so early an hour?" and then as if in an after thought, "I am really glad to see you."

"I wonder you don't guess Professor what my business is," Malcolm essayed.

"I never guess, young man, and I admired the fortune teller when he said the same thing yesterday. He expressed my sentiments exactly. Guessing is not a science. It is a vice. A sister vice to gambling. The world would be a better place to live in if people would learn to think and draw inferences from given facts and circumstances. It surprises me how the average man gets about in life when he scarcely does any reasoned thinking from one year's end to the other. I find that adversity is the best corrective of their casualism. A man in difficult straits will at least think how he is to get his bread and butter for the next day."

Malcolm understood the professor well. He knew that if he did not interrupt this peroration there would be little chance of his ever getting to the point.

"Excuse my clumsy way of expressing myself Professor, but I certainly meant that I

was sure that you would be able to infer the purpose of my visit."

"I think we will save time if you will kindly tell me your business Mr. Wensley. You know I am always willing to give you my best advice."

"I am afraid, Professor," (Malcolm would have lost all hopes of getting anything out of Mr. Shires, if he did not call him Professor at every conceivable opportunity), "that you will consider me a bit silly, but I do not know how I am to act in connection with what the fortune teller told me yesterday, and it is because I am doubtful I have come to you for advice."

"Very sensible of you indeed," remarked the Professor, "and I thank you for the compliment you pay me in coming to me. I am bound, however, to admit that I have not yet made a regular course of study of such subjects as fortune telling, astronomy and witchcraft. We educationists are really very busy men and it takes us all our time to master our particular subjects. Again an educationist has no right whatever to express his opinion freely in matters concerning which he has doubts. It is his duty, if not to himself, to the respected profession to which he belongs, to make a careful and scientific study of any subject before he states his views concerning it. No educationist worth the name can ever afford to make a mistake. You will gather from this that I am unable to give you definite advice and that I ask to be excused from saying

anything indefinite. But your visit here this morning will not be in vain. I am in a position to direct you to an Indian gentleman, a professor of the Winponce College who is an authority in this matter. I shall only be too pleased to give you a letter of introduction to him. Would you care to have it?"

"Certainly Professor, certainly," said Malcolm, "I am extremely indebted to you."

"Not at all, not at all. It is only what you deserve for having the common sense to come to me. So few people have common sense. I am glad to remark that you have always struck me as being exceedingly percipient."

The letter was addressed to Professor Maitra of Winponce College. Malcolm realized that he could not with any regard for propriety call on Mr. Maitra before ten o'clock, he accordingly returned home and after breakfast drove to the College.

Mr. Maitra saw him at once. He opened the conversation by saying, "I shall indeed be very glad to be of any service to you Mr. Wensley. Professor Shires is an intimate friend of mine. Tell me all about your case and I shall know how to advice you."

Malcolm explained the facts of the case with admirable clearness and precision. When he had completed the story, Mr. Maitra remarked.



"I am convinced from all that you have told me that the man is not a fraud. But he has fallen in virtue, otherwise he would not have received money from you in recognition of services rendered, nor would he have stipulated a definite figure for the performance of the ceremony. Such men make a vow never to receive any payment or reward; of course they have to live but they are required by their vows to live by charity only. Yes, Mr. Wensley, the man is genuine but he has fallen and violated his vows and hence he will gradually lose the peculiar gifts he has been endowed with. In view of this consideration I regard it as probable that he is only partially correct in his prognostications concerning your case. But what he has said should not be lightly regarded, you must seek reliable advice and that without any avoidable delay. There is a man in Chingrihatta Road, I don't know the number of his house but any one in the street will direct you to him if you ask for *Thuny of the River*. He is really a remarkable man. He has performed some most remarkable cures and afforded clues which have led to the apprehension of several of the cleverest criminals of Calcutta. He accepts no fees and he sees people in strict confidence. When you call at his house you are handed a ticket and you must wait your turn, when your number is called out. He makes no exception to this rule; people have been known to wait for two or three days to see him. When I say that he

is remarkable, I speak from personal experience. We lost a considerable amount of jewellery once. I had no faith in the police, as on a previous occasion, years ago, when something was stolen from the house and I went to the Police Station, the Inspector point blank told me not to have any hopes. "You see," he said, "we make an entry in the Register of Cases but we forget all about it when the page is turned over." So I went to "Thuny of the River." As soon as I was admitted into his presence and before I could say a word he told me, 'go to the Howrah Station this evening and you will meet a man coming from Burdwan; as soon as you see him hand him over to the police. He has gone to Burdwan to sell the jewellery; as he will not be successful he will return with them in his possession.' I went away not a little disappointed, but on calmer reflection I realized that I had nothing to lose in following his advice. From four in the evening till ten at night,—(really Mr. Wensley it is difficult to define when the evening commences and when it ends. I understand you people invite one another to evenings at home commencing at 9-30 P.M.), I watched every train that came in and, now that I think of it, I often laugh when I remember that I had to watch ten platforms and jump across the rails from one to another. I saw no one whom I knew except my son, who voluntarily told me that he had gone to Bandel to see a College friend. I don't know what possessed me but after

dinner that night I called my boy into a side room and told him that I had been to "Thuny of the River," and of what the man had told me, adding on my own that if the culprit did not return the jewels immediately an awful fate would befall him in three days. The boy fell at my feet and confessed that he had removed the jewels as he was forced to obtain money to pay certain debts he had contracted: It was a pitiable case Mr. Wensley: He had fallen into bad company."

Malcolm felt somewhat relieved at the interview. He made up his mind that he would see "Thuny of the River" the next day, but in coming to a decision he had forgotten to consider what Martha would have to say. When he returned home and Martha enquired where he had been, he told her all that Professors Shires and Maitra had told him.

"Malcolm," she said, "if you have any love for me, and, and any respect for my feelings, promise me you will not see this man or any other fortune teller. They are all humbugs, Malcolm, and you a Christian should be ashamed to believe in them."

At first he demurred, but she pleaded so earnestly and expressed herself so strongly, that at length he gave in.

Two months after the incidents recorded in this chapter, Mr. Canning was suddenly taken ill of small-pox of a virulent type and died within three days. His wife was

paid his provident fund money and the cost of a passage to England. Within a fortnight after his death she left for Liverpool. It is uncertain how many of the others recalled the fortune teller's prediction. Malcolm did, and was profoundly affected by it, and he repeatedly kept saying to himself. "It is my turn next. It is my turn next."

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## CHAPTER XI.

### **The Guardian Angel.**

Malcolm's health began to fail considerably since Christmas but his debts prevented him from proceeding on long leave. Every doctor he saw declared him to be perfectly sound but advised him to take rest as the only possible cure for a run down constitution. It was with the greatest difficulty that he was able to get through his day's work and when he returned home in the evenings he was compelled to take to bed at once and apply an ice bag to his head. Martha was quite indifferent to his sufferings. She lived her own life, and went out frequently at nights, and when she returned, which was often past midnight, he had to help to undress her. As he was a victim to insomnia he was invariably awake when she arrived but sometimes he was disturbed from a sleep into which he had just fallen. On such occasions Martha flew into a temper and accused him of being the most indifferent husband she knew of. "Why," she would say, "at the rink or the theatre there are heaps of young fellows who die to do something for me. They hang on so attentively and patiently and feel quite flattered if I ask them only to get me a glass of wine. What wouldn't they give if I asked them to do the things I am privileged to ask only you,

and yet you seem to think it a nuisance instead of a pleasure. If I was a husband, never mind what I would do. Really, Malcolm, you are very trying. If you got up a little and went about with me and did a few things, which as a husband you should do, I am sure you will get rid of all your imaginary troubles. You are nothing but a hypochondriac."

Malcolm bore all that she said in silence. He never forgot that she had a violent temper and he had no desire to provoke an argument which could only lead to one result, namely to unnerve him and throw him further back in health.

It was early in May when Martha one day informed him that she was going to Bombay to bring Gwendolyn Carpenter to spend a few months with them at Calcutta. She declared that she would soon go mad if she did not have congenial company in the house. He felt there was some reasonableness in her complaint as he was really then not a fit companion for anyone, his health being extremely poor and groaning under the burden of his debts he was always depressed and melancholy in spirits. The fact that he would have to borrow money to pay for their travelling expenses troubled him not a little, but to one already so much in debt a small additional burden did not weigh too heavily. Moreover to face the truth he feared to thwart Martha. He was afraid that if he did not meet

her wishes in this direction she might be led astray by *the many young fellows* she spoke of. Not that he ever doubted Martha's faithfulness or uprightness of character, but if there was anything he abhorred it was to hear scandal about a married woman, and Martha was not always very discreet, and once before he had heard some stories about her and a man named Jacob. The world he knew was very cruel and he was aware how easily a woman gets talked about. He therefore hoped that with Gwendolyn Carpenter in the house she would stay more at home and gradually lose the desire for being out so frequently at nights.

All Mrs. Carpenter's daughters, except Gwendolyn who was the youngest, had married. Gwendolyn had displayed remarkable ability at school and had done very well at all her examinations. It was the desire of her life to become a teacher. Nothing else appealed to her in the same way. She loved children. She loved to impart knowledge. Immediately after passing the Matriculation examination she was offered the post of a junior Mistress in the Cathedral High School on forty rupees a month. Mrs. Carpenter had practically gone through all the money that was left to her by her late husband. She was becoming greatly troubled and anxious about the future. She could now count the number of her friends on her fingers and her near relatives seldom ever wrote to her or came to see her.

Often they slighted her. None of her married daughters helped her. Brought up in comfort and luxury—she was the daughter of a rich merchant and subsequently the wife of a fairly well-to-do man—Mrs. Carpenter could not bring herself to living in anything but a good locality. Other inconveniences and privations she was quite ready to bear. It was Gwendolyn who was with her at the most anxious period of her life and who was her only source of comfort. There was nothing that Gwendolyn would not do for her. She cheerfully went to the market every morning in order to get the best food at the cheapest prices. Most girls, especially girls of her age, would have considered this beneath them. Indeed some of the unkind boys and girls spoke of her as the “bazar girl.” Gwendolyn overheard these remarks occasionally but she paid no attention to them. In the afternoons she went about rendering odd services to others and in the evenings before dinner and in the mornings before breakfast she practiced the piano.

Simultaneously with the offer of the appointment in the School, Mrs. Carpenter received a letter from the Director of Public Instruction informing her that as her daughter, Miss Gwendolyn, had secured the highest place in the examination among all the European girls that had appeared, she was entitled to a scholarship of twentyfive rupees a month tenable for four years.



Gwendolyn's heart gave a leap of delight as she read the letter. She knew that she was capable of graduating successfully in the time allowed. She was about to tell her mother how glad she was that the means had been provided to enable her to complete her education, when she noticed that there were tears in her mother's eyes. She guessed the truth at once.

"Don't be anxious Mother dear," she said, as she kissed the old lady on her cheek. "I understand all, but I didn't think it was as bad as that. Please write declining the scholarship. I had already told Miss Chimes that I accept the appointment offered me."

But Mrs. Carpenter knowing what it would cost the child to make the sacrifice was determined not to surrender the scholarship without some effort to raise the wind. She could think of no one who would help her except Malcolm Wensley. She had helped him once. Would he remember this? After great hesitation she wrote to Martha merely setting forth the bare facts and stating that as she could not possibly manage any longer unless Gwendolyn earned at least forty or fifty rupees she had decided, at Gwendolyn's request, more than anything else, to decline the scholarship.

As Martha handed the letter to Malcolm to read, she remarked, "What a shame, Malcolm. We all counted on Gwendolyn wearing a cap and gown one day."

"And she shall," said Malcolm, "if you wish it and she has it in her. I'll make up the difference. I can never forget Mrs. Carpenter's kindness to me."

"But how can you Malcolm. No I will not allow it. You are in debt already,"

"That does not matter in the least. I'll find the means to get the money."

Gwendolyn wrote back herself and thanked Martha and Malcolm for their kindness, assuring them that they could count on her lifelong gratitude.

Four years later when dressed in her cloak and looking a creature any man would be proud to possess, she kissed her mother before she left the house for the Convocation Address, and said, "Mother I owe everything to Mr. Wensley and do you know, mother, that I like him a great deal. There can't be anything wrong, mother, in my liking him. Can there?"

"No child, no," said Mrs. Carpenter. "There is every reason why you should like him. There's nothing wrong in doing so."

A few months later she obtained an appointment on a hundred and twenty five rupees in the Cathedral High School. Within a few months of joining her appointment she became a member of almost every society managed by ladies and established to be of service or assistance to others. Her patience, calm temper and superabundant energy soon gave

her a prominent position in most of these institutions; and she was indispensable in another direction. Whenever any entertainments were held, and these had to be held fairly frequently in order to raise sufficient funds for the needy, Gwendolyn was charged with the duties of arranging the programme, attending to the rehearsals and playing the accompaniments on the piano. And all the entertainments run under her management were complete successes. She, herself, singing and playing in her usual captivating manner.

The day that Martha and Gwendolyn arrived, Malcolm was feeling too ill to go to the station; so he sent one of his office babus to meet them. He instructed the babu to obtain a taxi for the ladies immediately on the arrival of the train and to look after their luggage himself, bringing it home in a closed ghary. Before Martha and Gwendolyn arrived from the station some friends had called and were shown into the drawing room. Malcolm had just completed dressing when Gwendolyn and Martha arrived and Gwendolyn obtaining permission to go into his room expressed her thanks for the invitation, he had extended to her.

"I know you are not well, Mr. Wensley," she said, "but I am going to try to make you well, so cheer up."

"Thank you Miss Carpenter," he replied, "your bright face and winsome manners do

make a man feel a bit different, but don't let me keep you. Your friends are waiting to see you, don't be detained on my account."

"Not at all, Mr. Wensley. Martha is entertaining them and I am really very anxious to have a long chat with you. It is such an age since we have seen one another and so many changes have taken place during this time. Worst of all though is this illness of yours; you can't imagine how sorry I am, for you used to be so healthy and strong and so powerful. I always thought of the giants in the fairy tale books when I saw you. But I am almost forgetting to thank you for all your help during these four years I have been at College. Ever since I heard of your illness I have never ceased to pray for your recovery—Morning and night I do so; and I have great faith in Providence and that you will yet be quite well."

"Yes, Miss. Carpenter," he said, "it is quite a long time since we met. Why I almost remember you in short frocks; I particularly remember the striped yellow and black one you so frequently wore, you always reminded me of a young tiger when I saw you in it. But now, why you are grown a big and beautiful woman and with your innocent countenance and in this pure white dress of yours, you look a big lamb. Isn't it strange that a little tiger should grow into a big lamb." And then looking up and down her he could not help admiring her unique beauty. Martha

was beautiful, but surely she was not half as beautiful as Gwendolyn. "I am very thankful to you for your prayers on my behalf, but I am very much afraid that they will not be heard, or, if heard, answered. It is impossible for me to last much longer." Having said this he stopped abruptly for he noticed a tear in her eye. "Really you must excuse me Miss. Carpenter," he said, "I have to get myself ready for work."

She laid her hand on his shoulder and said, "Be cheerful Mr. Wensley, you are dying for want of cheer. Nothing else. You never spoke in this fashion before. Don't forget you must give me a whole hour this evening and tell me all about yourself. Martha, I know, has an invitation to go out to tea and is going. She asked me to accompany her but I told her that I did not care to go out the day of my arrival. It would be so inconsiderate to do so. Don't forget. Be cheerful."

When he had dressed himself and gone into the dining room for his breakfast Martha came in there also. She kissed him and sat in the chair opposite. "I wish these people hadn't been in such a hurry to call," she remarked, "but I must entertain them I suppose. Please come home early this evening, Malcolm, Gwendolyn will be all alone. I will tell you all the news when I return from tea." And by the way, Gwendolyn is such an old and dear friend of mine that I told her she must

call you, "Malcolm," and you must call her, "Gwendolyn." Don't forget, Malcolm. And, Malcolm, she has spent much of her spare time in learning nursing and she has promised to do all she can to make you well. You must allow her to attend to you, Malcolm."

Before he could say a word she had left the room. After breakfasting he stepped out by a side entrance and went to his work. He usually did not leave the shop before half past five every evening, but that day he felt a bit impatient at the slow rate at which the time was passing and more than a dozen times he looked at the clock in front of him. It was hardly four when he discovered that there was nothing more to keep him at work.

Gwendolyn seemed to have expected him to return early. She was dressed for the evening waiting for him and immediately he entered she said, "Have a wash and come for tea Malcolm, everything is quite ready." It was many years since any one had taken the trouble of having everything ready for Malcolm.

They spent a very enjoyable time over tea. Gwendolyn did all the talking. She related such quaint and childish stories that he could not help bursting into fits of laughter.

"You are still a child in many respects, Gwendolyn. I am glad of it," he said, "I wish you will continue to have for many more

years such happiness as only belongs to children."

"How stupid, Malcolm, why I am five feet nine in height, and weigh ten stone and am twenty years of age, and you tell me that I am still a child. Would you believe the boys at school actually call me Lighthouse."

"Very sensible of them." Malcolm rejoined. "They come to you for shelter and lean against you I suppose."

She talked on for fully an hour and a half and to his surprise he sat up and listened to her and did not feel in the least bit tired. When at length she insisted that he should go and lie down for a few minutes, as she had one or two little things to attend to before Martha returned, he consented only very reluctantly.

Before they separated he said: "Gwendolyn you have told me so much this evening about yourself but you have very cleverly kept from relating any of your love affairs. I didn't think you were so shrewd. Now tell me how many sweethearts you have had. Who your best boy is and when you expect to get married and then I will agree to let you go."

"Again you are stupid, Malcolm. Forgive me for saying so, I don't care for men like that. I know that all the young men speak of me as a tartar. They never come near me. I have never had a sweetheart and I am pretty sure I shall never have one. Goodness me! what am

I to do with a sweetheart. I assure you I really don't know. I am exceedingly happy without one and I cannot imagine that my happiness can be increased by having something running after my tail and I do so hate kissing; the way I see some couples hugging and kissing one another really makes me feel quite sick."

"Do you really want me to infer that no young man has ever kissed you, Gwendolyn."

She only smiled in reply.

In the days that followed Gwendolyn proved herself to be quite a host. She insisted that Malcolm was not to get up in the morning and take the milk in or superintend the making of early morning tea and *chotahazri*. She told Malcolm that she was very disappointed that Martha should have required him to attend to these matters. She would bring in his *chotahazri* every morning herself and insist on his promising that he would eat every bit. Gradually she increased the quantity she took in. He ate all she brought in and felt his appetite returning. She contrived by every means in her power to make the meal tempting and she invariably served fruit and eggs with the tea and toast. This was a great change to Malcolm. Before she came he hardly ever ate a morsel, satisfying himself with one or two cups of tea.

And she insisted on bathing his head in olive oil every night before he retired. She never neglected this even on nights when she went



out with Martha. Malcolm noticed also that his clothes were always attended to and put out ready for him to wear and his room cleaned and tidied. He was not now subjected to the annoyance of having to pin his clothes together in certain places or of drawing the heels of his socks down to prevent the torn portions being exposed. When one day he protested at all she did for him she said. "Do you expect me to sit idle Malcolm. No, I never shall, and it's a shame you have had to do all this for yourself previously, and it is a greater shame you should have to do it now when you are ill. Really I am very disappointed in Martha. She used to be such a different girl. I wonder why she has changed so."

After a fortnight he realised that he was feeling much better and he told Gwendolyn so and added that as the pains in his head were less intense he could quite manage to attend to himself. He explained that he felt such a bore to have to occasion so much trouble to her and to require her to give up so much time every night in nursing him.

When she replied he knew that she was a little hurt, "Malcolm I am going to attend to you daily until I go away, but of course you have a right to object if you consider me a nuisance. You often tell me you are feeling better, but that is not sufficient, you must feel quite well. Do let me continue helping you to recover. I shall feel very disappointed

if you deprive me of the privilege of being of some service to you. Look at the lot you have done for me and are doing for me in giving me this holiday."

What answer could he give except to consent to her wishes. But in doing so he knew he was standing on a precipice. He realized that some new feeling was coming over him. He literally felt afraid of himself. He knew that Gwendolyn was the very soul of purity and honour and he felt that he would rather kill himself than outrage her feelings. But yet he recognised that he could not very easily control himself. Every day he felt he loved Gwendolyn Carpenter more and more, and how he kept from telling her so, was a mystery to him. When she came to him at nights, and had finished bathing his head, he would detain her to ask her a few foolish questions about the house and invariably during all this time he held her hands in his and gazed directly into her eyes. Sometimes he almost felt, that her eyes brightened up and literally shone whenever he held her hands, but he could not trust himself to believe his senses. A few days later he had the boldness, before she left him, to kiss her hands. He did so most reverently but as he did it his whole body burnt with a passion such as he had never experienced before. To this act of his Gwendolyn also did not object. She seemed to like it and appreciate it almost as much as a good master loves the lick of a

pet dog. She never dragged away her hands, and as the days wore on she seemed to expect this tribute of his gratitude, for gradually it became her practice, immediately after attending to him, to sit on the side of his bed and place both her hands in front of her so that he could easily get hold of them.

Malcolm began to get more and more afraid of himself. Her very presence electrified him. He had only to see her, when he could think of nothing else but her, and his whole body would get infused with a buoyant feeling. He reflected very carefully over the matter and had to confess to himself that he was actually very much in love with Gwendolyn. He felt he knew perfectly well what the result would be if he spoke to her of his love. She would immediately report him to Martha. But he did not fear this step. What he could not bear was the thought that it would lead to a rupture between Gwendolyn and himself. He loved her, he so wanted to tell her so, but as he realised that it would mean an end to all his pleasures if he told her, he controlled himself and remained silent.

It was impossible he felt to ask her again to discontinue attending to him without hurting her feelings, nor could he hope to control himself sufficiently to discontinue kissing her hand when she had concluded nursing him. No, both were impossible. But it was also

equally impossible for things to remain as at present. He had therefore to think of some other means of terminating the existing arrangement.

He accordingly wrote to a friend of his in Darjeeling and explained to him that an intimate friend of his wife's was paying them a visit. That it was unbearably hot at the time in Calcutta and that he wished he could send them to the hills. He asked his friend that if he was able to put them up for a month or two to write to him suggesting that they should all come up to Darjeeling for the summer. He particularly asked his friend to make it appear that his letter was an original suggestion coming from him because his wife and her friend would not consent to go, if they thought that he (Malcolm) had planned to give them a holiday while denying himself one.

During the next few days Malcolm avoided Gwendolyn as much as possible and only saw her in the presence of Martha, except when, as usual, she came in the mornings and evenings to attend him.

On the fifth morning Martha received a letter from Mrs. Bowers, the wife of his Darjeeling friend, in which she invited all of them to come up to Darjeeling. She was a very business-like woman and entered carefully into the question of what it would cost them to spend a couple of months there.

When Martha had read the letter she turned to Malcolm and said, "Fancy Malcolm I was only telling Gwendolyn yesterday how much I was feeling the heat and how I longed to have a short holiday at a hill station, and that I did so like to go when I had her with me so that I would not be too lonely and people would not talk, and here Mrs. Bowers has actually written inviting us to come up at once as she has some rooms to spare. Oh Malcolm dear you will consent to Gwen and I going. Wont you? We can get ready in four or five days, we wont trouble you much, just one warm dress each and our fares: What do you say Gwen?"

"I do hope you are not seriously thinking of going, Martha. Look at the expense it would mean, and consider Malcolm. He is not quite well and really needs looking after. You should not leave him so frequently, Martha."

"I beg that you will not consider me in this matter Gwendolyn," Malcolm interrupted. "I shall arrange to be out of Calcutta for a little time on canvassing work and the quiet when I am away and when I come back might do me good. I will earn some travelling allowance and commission for the trip I have to make and the money required by Martha can thus be easily found. Besides Mrs. Bowers' terms are so moderate and the advantage Martha has of going with an agreeable companion is so great that it would be foolish

to throw away such a chance of benefitting by a change to the hills."

Malcolm knew perfectly well that this was the correct course for him to adopt but he was equally certain that he was signing his death warrant, as he knew too well that he would quickly fall back in health without Gwendolyn's stimulating presence.

Martha did not notice the strained voice in which Malcolm spoke, but Gwendolyn did, and she felt that he was making a great sacrifice in consenting to this proposal. The exact reason which made it a sacrifice she did not stop to consider.

"I certainly have no right to object, Malcolm. Indeed I am extremely grateful to you and Martha for your kindness in thinking of making my holiday as pleasant as possible. I am very happy here and I don't know that I shall be happier in Darjeeling. Calcutta is so nice I wish I could always live here. It is the first holiday I have ever enjoyed. I cannot say how grateful I am to both of you. But I do feel that in the interests of your health it is wrong for us to leave you."

"How silly of you Gwendolyn," interrupted Martha. "Half of Malcolm's illness is imagination and the other half is fuss. He has seen so many doctors, ask him what they have told him. If we are not here to fuss with him he will soon be quite well."

Gwendolyn got up and walked away. Malcolm looked at Martha but before he could say a word she remarked, "Don't be a hypocrite, Malcolm. You are already wicked enough, don't add to your sins. Since Gwendolyn has come you have never been out for cards a single night. I know the game you are playing at, you wish her to tell Mrs. Carpenter that my complaints against you are untrue."

"I am not aware that you complained to Mrs. Carpenter about me, but I assure you Martha I am perfectly unconcerned in the matter."

He rose to go.

"Stay," she called out; "you have not told me what I should reply."

"Of course reply accepting, Martha, and please make arrangements to go as early as possible."

That night Martha and Gwendolyn had arranged to go to an evening at home. They were both dressed and ready. During dinner Gwendolyn twice became exceedingly pale. The change in her was so severe that both Martha and Malcolm could not help noticing it. She hardly ate anything and scarcely spoke a word. This was quite unusual as on other days she was the life and soul of the party. Martha insisted on her getting to bed and after warning Malcolm to go to her in case she needed anything, left to keep her engagement.

The day had been a trying one to Malcolm and he was glad to retire early. He fell asleep almost immediately he got into bed and began to dream. His father came to him in his dream and stood at the foot of his bed. Alongside of him was a lady and in the distance at the end of the room stood another lady, whom he recognised, from a photo he had with him, as his mother. The former lady was dressed in white and had a black veil covering her face. Malcolm looked at her but he could not make out who she was, although her figure seemed strangely familiar to him.

"He needs looking after," he heard his father say. "I have watched him day and night for three long years but now I have other business to attend to. I shall see him now and then but I cannot watch over him constantly. He is a good boy but almost every body has misunderstood him. Even I died without forgiving him for imaginary wrongs. The truth of the matter is that he is under an evil influence, the devil has been set at work against him. Unless he is influenced by a good spirit and guarded by a careful attendant he will either sink into perfidy or lose his life. The first must be avoided at all costs, the second must also be averted or at any rate delayed as much as possible. He has it in him to do much good and if he lives he will do it. Many will suffer if he dies. Can you now imagine how responsible a task you are wishing



to take over and do you actually vow and promise me that you are seeking to take over this task because you really love him? Beware, beware, if you are deceiving me. If you fail to influence him by day or watch over him by night and as a result either of the calamities I have stated before befall him, I shall haunt you. Your very life will be a misery. You will not have a moment's peace. Remember that you are actually asking to be appointed his guardian angel. Tell me, tell me truly, are you worthy of what you ask, and above all are you sincere. I love the boy so much that I am positively afraid to give up looking after him, and yet I must do the other business that is required of me. For days I have moved about restlessly seeking some one to take over this task and at last I have found you. Swear to me, swear my child, that you are in earnest and that you are a true woman, get on your knees and swear."

Instantly she dropped on her knees. "I love him, Sir, I love him, I shall always guard and watch him, my spirit and soul shall ever watch over him. Here and now, Sir, I make the vow. I make it on all that is holy in heaven and earth. Say that you accept my service and will resign your task in my favour."

He laid his hands on her bowed head. "God grant you strength my child to undertake and perform this task. I accept your offer."

In a moment the figures of both the ladies

vanished and the one with the veil appeared to Malcolm to have wings. After this Malcolm's father approached him. He laid his hands gently on his chest and said, "My son, I am going away for some time. Don't fret for me, I'll come again to you."

Malcolm was overwhelmed with sorrow. He shouted out, "Don't leave me, don't leave me. I shall die if you leave me," and he leaped out of his bed. He had scarcely done so when Gwendolyn rushed into the room. "Malcolm," she said, "what ever is the matter with you? You have been screaming in your sleep. Are you in pain? Did anything frighten you?"

"I am sure you are yourself ill and have imagined all this," he replied. "Go and sleep Gwendolyn."

She was in her night gown. Oh how beautiful she looked. He felt that if she stayed he could never control himself, that he must take her into his arms and kiss her and tell her that he loved her.

"Malcolm," she said, "I do so want to have a quiet talk with you. May I Malcolm? I have been looking forward for the opportunity but none occurred; and whether I am right or wrong I don't know, but I feel that during the past week you have been avoiding me. I hope I have done nothing to offend you. Believe me I have tried to do everything to please you, Malcolm," and while she spoke

she seated herself on his cot and took his hands in hers.

"Malcolm," she continued, "I know why you are suffering. Some one or something only just now seems to have told me all. You are fretting because Martha will not live with you as a wife should. What this means I don't understand. Believe me I don't, but this I know, that other married people are not so apart as you and Martha are, and I know it is not your fault. Why, for instance, should she go out every evening and so often at nights? Why should she jump at the idea of leaving you alone and going to Darjeeling? Why does she accuse you of pretending to be ill, and why, oh why, does she not see that you are wasting your life away because of these debts of yours? Malcolm, I sympathise with you. Tell me if there is anything I can do to make your life more cheerful and happy. And again I know that Martha has practically cut you away from your relatives and friends. Oh why, why will she behave so! She used to be such a different girl. Tell me Malcolm, tell me, what I can do to help you. I do feel so sorry for you. Have faith in God, Malcolm. It will pull you through many a crisis and hours of anxiety."

He lost control over himself. "Kiss me dear, kiss me," he pleaded.

To his astonishment she immediately bent over him and placed her lips to his. He

kissed her as he had never kissed any one before. He drew her down to him and practically smothered her in his embrace. She returned kiss for kiss. For quite a long time they remained in this position. All the time he held her his whole body trembled with excitement and as he kissed her he repeatedly murmured, "I love you, I love you, Gwendolyn."

Suddenly he came back to his senses. He released her almost rudely and jumped to his feet. "My girl," he said, "forgive me for this. I have loved you from the day you came here and I have been trying to kill the love because it is unholy. Oh what a miserable and contemptible creature I am? Can I ever forgive myself for the wrong I have done you? No, never. Never. Gwendolyn dear, forgive me. Say that you forgive me. Believe me that it is I who arranged this trip to Darjeeling for Martha and you. It was because I was afraid I should lose control over myself and behave in this cowardly fashion. It will cost me a great deal but I am really glad you are going away for this change, and as I cannot trust myself again in your presence, at least for some time to come, I must get away tomorrow on canvassing work. Say that you forgive me, Gwendolyn."

She came up to him and kissed him and said, "Malcolm, there is nothing to forgive, but you are right. You must get away and we

must go away to Darjeeling. Good night Malcolm," and again she kissed him before she left.

When she got back to her room she flung herself on her bed and cried, "Was I right or was I wrong?" and then not being able to control the tears that came into her eyes she smothered her face in her pillow and fell asleep.

Malcolm was to leave the next night for Monghyr. They had early dinner. Throughout the meal Martha spoke to Gwendolyn of Malcolm's brother, Charles. Of course she could say nothing good of him. He was everything that was bad. She referred particularly to his *affair*, as she called it, with Nurse Spencer, which led to his dismissal from the college. She asserted that there was not a shade of doubt about his guilt because during the time he stayed with them she had opened two or three letters to his address written in a lady's hand, and discovered the truth. She went on to say that she felt that such wicked people ought to be punished, summarily and severely, and that she was often tempted to send the letters to Mr. Spencer to enable him to take the necessary proceedings against Charles. "If you don't believe me Gwendolyn," she said, "I'll show you one or two of the letters."

"Martha," Malcolm interrupted, "you told me you had destroyed those letters. Tell me the truth about them."

"Shut up, Malcolm. I am not talking to you. Do you wish to see them Gwendolyn?"

"I forbid you to show those letters to Gwendolyn," he said. "I look upon them as the doings of a mentally affected woman if they are all that you say they are. I cannot believe Charles guilty of anything but imprudence. He was dismissed from the College because he was caught kissing her. There's nothing very wicked about that. It is wicked of you to open other peoples' letters, as wicked or even worse than the conduct you ascribe to Charles. And it is outrageous that you should invite others to read them, especially a pure-minded girl like Gwendolyn. Do you realize that you can be brought within the operation of the law for what you have done and propose to do."

"Shut up or I shall not be accountable for my actions, Malcolm: It is bad manners to interrupt the conversation of ladies. If you have no consideration for me show that you have some for Gwendolyn."

"Please let us change the subject, Martha," said Gwendolyn, "I am never inquisitive about other peoples' affairs."

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Martha and Gwendolyn went to the station to see Malcolm off. Martha spent most of the time at the bookstall examining the books on the shelf, much to the annoyance of the vendor who soon realised that she had no intention of

making a purchase. Malcolm and Gwendolyn sat in an empty compartment. She did not speak at first but frequently lifted her eyes and looked into his, and he was startled at the look of pleasure that he saw in them each time their eyes met. After remaining silent for some time she touched his hand gently and said, "Malcolm, how sorry I am for what happened to-night, but never mind Malcolm, cheer up and promise me that you will take care of yourself while we are away and that you will write to me just one letter to tell me how you are getting on. Malcolm, last night I fancied that it was best that you and I should be separated, but to-day I feel, no I am almost certain, that we are acting wrongly. This desertion on our part is, I am sure, Malcolm, not going to do you any good."

He noticed as she spoke that her eyes were wet and her lips were quivering.

Before he could reply Martha bounced into the carriage. "Why, whatever are you two about," she said. "One would fancy you have just returned from a funeral. Gwendolyn was telling me that you were screaming in your sleep last night. I told her that it was indigestion dramatised. Take care you digest your food before you lie down to-night. I see you will have another gentleman travelling with you. It won't do to make an ass of yourself."

When the train started he realised

how lonely he was. Never did he feel more lonely in all his life. He knew that he loved Gwendolyn beyond words, and he felt that no effort that he could make could crush the love that had been born in him for so sweet and precious a woman. No one but she had yet understood him. He recalled the dream he had the night previous. Even his own father had confessed in that dream that he had misunderstood him, and there was certainly no hope that Martha would ever understand him. She misconstrued everything he did. But with Gwendolyn everything was different. Almost in a day she had read the story of his life. He again recalled the dream. "Could it be possible," he said, "that the lady I saw standing alongside my father was Gwendolyn. No, it could not have been her. My father was dead. Gwendolyn is alive. They belong to different worlds. It might be possible for my father's spirit and soul to watch over me and guard me, but such a thing is not capable of performance by a living being, and yet for the life of me, I cannot imagine who the lady can possibly be." He spent nearly half an hour in attempting to fix upon some lady relative or friend of his, who had passed beyond the grave, but not one answered the description of the figure that appeared in his dream. He almost came to the conclusion that there was absolutely nothing in the dream notwithstanding that all his previous experience had taught him that the dreams



he had, in which his father had appeared to him, invariably had some definite meaning. While he was in this thoughtful mood he heard a voice calling out clearly and distinctly. The train was passing through open country and the voice seemed to come across many miles. Malcolm recognised it at once as the voice of the fortune-teller, "Sahib," it cried, "I shall offer up my prayers and mantras that you will find the other means of escape."

He was considerably frightened at this. He looked at his companion in the compartment and addressing him said, "Excuse me, please, but did you hear a peculiar noise just now coming across the field."

The other gentleman looked intently at him for a time and then smiled. "I am afraid I was a bit inattentive," he replied.

Malcolm realised at once that he had made a fool of himself in addressing the stranger. And yet it seemed so natural to him that if he heard the voice so clearly and distinctly the other person must most certainly have heard it too. But on further reflection he accused himself of weak-mindedness and of being the subject of mental hallucination. "It is my sickness that has brought all this about," he said. "I have been a fool and a cad to tell that innocent girl I love her; and I must do everything in my power to remove the evil I have done. I must if possible, put her in the way of meeting

agreeable young men in the hope that she might fall in love with one of them." Almost immediately the idea occurred to him that it would be an excellent match if she married his brother Charles. What a wife she would make him.

Malcolm slept very little that night and the next succeeding ones. When he did fall asleep he invariably dreamt that Gwendolyn was sitting by his side and watching him. She never spoke a word to him but her eyes seemed to follow all his movements.

All the spare time he had he spent in reconsidering the position. Inclination forced him to the conclusion that he should definitely tell Gwendolyn his love for her and ask her to be his sweetheart. He could not ask her to be more; but duty, ah the stern sense of duty, dictated to him in unmistakeable language that he had no right to spoil the life of a pure, innocent girl. The battle between inclination and duty was really a very severe one and finally much to his surprise he actually decided that if the primary object he had in view was to make Gwendolyn's life happy he should most certainly spoil it and render it unhappy if he withheld his love for her. It then occurred to him that he was not wholly to blame for all that had happened, that almost simultaneously and quite spontaneously Gwendolyn had of herself fallen in love with him. "It must have been so," he said to himself, "otherwise

she would not have kissed me so readily and passionately when I asked her to. Nor yet would she have allowed me to embrace her so passionately and for so long. Yes, yes, she does love me and what happened had to happen sooner or later."

He wished that he could have her with him for an hour or so to discuss the matter freely, but that was impossible. He was at Monghyr and she was at Darjeeling. Moreover he could not send a letter to her on the subject. He promised to write to her once but that was only to tell her about his health.

After most careful deliberation he decided that the best course for him to follow was to write a letter to Gwendolyn explaining fully all that he felt and thought, and to deliver the letter to her personally at the earliest opportunity. This is what he wrote:—

My darling Gwendolyn,

Permit me to call you darling for this once. I may never do so again, at any rate I shall never do so without your permission. I know that in writing this letter I am running the risk of losing your friendship, but I know also that if I do not write it I run a greater risk and that is of bringing misery to both of us because we happen to love one another dearly but seek to remain apart because of the barrier of my marriage; forgive me if I am too presumptuous in assuming that you love me. I have already confessed to you that I love you.

Now that I know you and love you I realise what love is. I have never loved like this before. To me now there is only one woman in this world and that woman is you. You are to me the most beautiful, the most pure, the most attractive creature in all the world. I only feel happy when I am in your presence. On such occasions all my troubles and miseries are forgotten; instead of feeling ill and weak I am then bursting with energy and strength. I have felt this change coming on me gradually ever since you set foot in the house and came into my room and spoke to me. For a long time I have felt it quite base and sinful on my part to love you. I mean to love you as I do, that is as a sweetheart. Alas you cannot be more, and believe me I honestly did all I could to kill the love in me. But latterly I have felt quite differently. I have felt convinced that you are my twin soul and that there is nothing sinful in my loving you in the way stated. I really love and worship you Gwendolyn, darling, and my love for you will keep me away from temptation. But if we do love one another why should we not express it to one another and enjoy the fruits of this love to the furthest limit permissible. For my part I have already confessed my love to you. At first I thought myself a cad and villain for doing so but as I look back I do not regret it. I feel that I should have been foolish if I did not. We were made to love one another. Is anything to be gained in kicking against our

fate? I feel that if I do not approach this subject to you fearlessly and manfully I shall destroy your happiness and be responsible for clouding your bright and innocent life. It is impossible of course for you to speak first; therefore it would be cowardly if I did not. I have been encouraged in the hope that you really and truly love me in the way I love you although I must confess that I am not so sure about it. I say to myself that there is no question but that you love me; otherwise you would not be so attentive to me or so concerned regarding my welfare and health but it is not so easy for me to say definitely whether you love me as a lover. I think you do. Because you seem to me to have derived distinct pleasure whenever I kissed your hand, because your eyes seem to brighten every time you look me full in the face, and you do this so often, and above all because you so willingly surrendered yourself to my embraces the night before I left for Monghyr. My doubts, however, are based on other considerations. I fear lest you should have permitted me to have such great pleasure either from considerations of gratitude or pity or both. You so often speak of being grateful to me for giving you this holiday and for doing other things for you and I can see that you understand my position so thoroughly that you pity my lot profoundly, hence I am sometimes forced to the conclusion that you permitted me to have some pleasure because of such pity and gratitude. Now I only declared

my love for you because I felt that it is just possible you love me in the same way as I love you. I should never have done so if at the time I had thought otherwise. Can you imagine therefore how impatient I am to know the truth. I know you are pure and truthful: I know you will tell me the truth whatever it costs. I therefore plead with you to tell me as soon as possible after you read this letter whether you permitted me to kiss and embrace you from motives of pity or gratitude or because you love me in the way I love you.

If your actions were guided by motives of pity or gratitude, I beg Gwendolyn that you will accept my humblest apology for my outrageous conduct. I beg that you will forget all about it and about what I have said in this letter of mine. I shall never insult you again or throw myself in your way although I shall never cease to love you as I do, and all I ask of you is to keep away from me for if I cannot possess your love your presence will be maddening to me.

Once again I beg that you will forgive me if in this letter also I am outraging your feelings. My only excuse is my undying and all absorbing love for you. Don't spare me but tell me the truth, whether your actions were influenced by love, pity, or gratitude.

Yours.

MALCOLM.

Having written this letter he put it into an envelope and sealed it and then placed it in his office despatch box.

Martha wrote to Malcolm that she was coming back early in July. It was now the last week of June. In seven or eight days more he would see Gwendolyn again. It is not to be supposed that having written that letter to Gwendolyn he was not assailed with doubts and misgivings as to whether or no he was taking a wise step. At all times there seemed to be two voices speaking within him, one telling him in forcible terms that he was doing wrong, that he was offending all the canons of upright living, that he was proposing to enter upon a course which at once was deceitful to Martha, to Gwen's mother and last but not least to both Gwen and himself. That the result of any such clandestine relationship between them could only end in disappointment and misery. That there was nothing secret in this world that could be hid and that sooner or later their illegitimate relationship would be discovered much to their disgrace. And here the voice spoke louder than ever. "Remember a man may hold his head up when in such disgrace and he may live it down but a woman loses her name only once. If you love the girl as you declare you do, you should rather cut your tongue out than speak the word to her and it is positively infamous to give her the letter

you have written. Remember she has told you that she has never loved before. Your offer of love may be accepted by her, simply because she is young, unworldly and inexperienced and not because there is in her any real and deep affection for you. It is just possible that she has arrived at the time of her life when she feels the need of the love of a man. But have you any right to take advantage of her inexperience and of such a situation? Can it ever be possible for a pure and innocent girl to love the husband of another woman? Nay man, do not be deceived. If you address her in the matter and she joins you in this unholy purpose beware of the vengeance of God, and the vengeance will fall not on her but on you."

But the other voice was equally persuasive and vehement. "Hearken not, it said, to these puritanical doctrines. God intended man to live happily but without sin. There is no sin in loving one of God's own creatures, especially one so full of good purpose. There is no danger in loving her. She will return your love. Indeed she has already done so. But she will never stoop to sin. The temptation to sin may beset you. It may beset her. You may or may not be strong enough to withstand it. She will. Her heart and soul are already yours. Why wreck her whole life by adherence to foolish ideas. All marriages are not arranged in heaven. Con-



sider your own case. What has marriage done to your life? It has changed it very considerably no doubt but the change has been decidedly for the worse. You were a happy, cheerful, healthy, Godfearing and religious man. It was difficult to find any vice in you. What are you now? You never know a moment's happiness. You are always in despair. Your health has left you probably never to return again. You never go to church now. You never pray to God. What is the obvious conclusion? That you believe in God? Impossible! No man who believes in the existence of God will fail to worship and serve him. All the indifference, all the negligence to serve God and to serve him rightly is because of the want of belief in God. Nothing more; nothing less. Your redemption lies in loving this woman, in coming under her good influence. It is the one and only opportunity of your life. Such opportunities present themselves only once. Seize it, seize it while you may, to-morrow may be too late."

More than once during the remaining days he was on the point of destroying the letter and following the dictates of the first voice. He had often heard that a man should always be guided by the voice of his conscience, but with both these voices speaking within him he was truly and sincerely in doubt as to which was the voice of conscience, and which was

not. The day before their arrival he actually tore open the envelope of the letter as the first step towards the act of destroying it. He had at the moment made up his mind to destroy it, but he felt that he could not destroy it without reading it over once more. It was a sacred document to him. And as he read it he changed his mind once again. "No," he said, "Gwendolyn shall receive it, but she shall not receive it as it is. I shall add to it all that has passed through my mind since I wrote it and what is more I shall ask her to take her own time in considering the matter, and indeed I shall invite her to take the advice of some experienced and trustworthy lady friend of hers."

He acted in accordance with this idea. He added to the letter, sealed the envelope and placed it in his coat pocket.

The Darjeeling Mail was due at eleven in the morning. He was at the station at ten on the day they were to arrive. Despite the fact that he had not slept a wink the whole of the previous night he felt peculiarly fresh and fit. He had paid great attention to his toilet, a thing he had not done for years, and dressed himself in a new suit which he had ordered since they had left for Darjeeling.

The hour Malcolm waited at the station seemed a year and, at the rate he was walking, he must have paced the platform up and down more than a hundred times before he saw the

semaphore lowered. When he helped Martha out of her compartment she complained of feeling very tired. It was an opening he was looking for: "If Gwendolyn is not too tired Martha, she might remain with me and identify the luggage, which we will bring back in a closed carriage, while you had better drive home in a taxi."

"A capital idea," said Gwen, and the proposal was agreed to immediately.

As soon as the taxi drove away he turned to Gwen and said. "What would you think of me if I told you I planned to send Martha away alone so as to have you with me for an hour or so."

"I shall certainly consider you a very wicked boy," she said, but she smiled so sweetly that he could not help coming to the conclusion that the arrangement was exactly what she wished for.

"I have a letter for you, Gwen."

"From whom, Malcolm?"

"From a sweetheart of yours."

"Don't be silly Malcolm. You know I have no sweetheart."

"May be," he said, "but you are somebody's sweetheart."

"Show me the letter, Malcolm."

He pulled it out of his coat pocket and placed it in her hands.

"Why, Malcolm, this is your handwriting. What a fraud you are to raise my hopes in this fashion. The way you spoke I thought I'd have to make arrangements for my marriage by special licence to-morrow."

"Gwendolyn," he said, "please read it the first opportunity you get. I mean when you are alone, and give me a reply as early as you can. I have no desire to rush you to a decision, but do not keep me in suspense too long;" and then he broke off, "What do you say to a cup of tea?"

"Just the thing I need, Malcolm."

They repaired to the refreshment room and took their seats at one of the corner tables. When the bearer approached them Malcolm ordered tea and biscuits for two. While he was speaking to the servant he noticed that Gwendolyn had torn open the envelope and was reading the letter. He said not a word. In fact he could not. He was like a naughty school boy awaiting punishment. He made the tea without even enquiring from Gwendolyn how much sugar she liked. She on the other hand was too intent on the letter to pay any attention to what he was doing; and he recognised that he would make a false step if he disturbed her. Not a muscle of her face moved. It was evident to him that she was not merely reading; she was thinking deeply and quickly. When she had finished the letter she returned it to its cover and

handing it back to him said : "Malcolm letters like this should never be preserved ; please destroy it."

"I shall certainly do as you bid me, Gwen."

"No, Malcolm, after all I think I'll keep it."

They proceeded with the meal in silence. When it was over, Gwendolyn addressed him thus :—

"Malcolm will you please get the luggage and have it put on the carriage and then come for me? I wish to be left alone. I want to think. Order another cup of tea for me Malcolm, please, before you go and don't be in a hurry to come back."

He left her even as she spoke. Walking up to the bar he ordered the tea and then went about to attend to the luggage. In five minutes he had everything ready but he did not return at once to the refreshment room. He stood before one of the large time tables and gazed at it vacantly. How long he remained doing this he could not tell but he was brought back to himself by a sweet voice asking him, "Are you working out the details of a long tour, Sir, because if you are I might be able to be of some assistance to you."

It was Gwendolyn. "Come, Malcolm," she continued, "if everything is ready we must make a start. Martha will be wondering what has happened to us. Don't trouble, I have paid for the tea."

He could not trust himself to speak. He really did not know what to say. He led the way to the carriage not daring to walk by her side.

No sooner the carriage was out of the station precincts, Gwendolyn placed her hands in his and looking him full in the face said: "Malcolm I am ready to answer the question you asked me in your letter. *I love you for your own sake.*"

For a moment he was paralysed with joy; the next he was conscious of only one matter and that was that Gwendolyn and he loved one another; the world contained nothing else for him. He grasped her hand and kissed it repeatedly. "Gwendolyn," he said, "I shall devote the rest of my life to your happiness. There is nothing I shall not do to meet your slightest wish."

A week after Martha and Gwendolyn returned from Darjeeling, Malcolm received a letter from his sister Eileen. She was a widow with two little children on her hands. She was employed in a shop at a small station a short distance from Calcutta. She wrote saying that for some time past she had been ailing and during the last few days her illness had taken a turn for the worse. That the Assistant Surgeon of the place was quite alarmed at the symptoms that had developed and had urged her to get herself admitted at once into one of the Calcutta Hospitals. She would be arriving

in Calcutta the following day. Would Malcolm kindly make all arrangements to get her admitted? "I do wish," she wrote, "that it may not be necessary for me to go to hospital. I have such a dread of doing so. I know I shall never come out alive if I go in, and this brings me to what troubles me the most. What will become of my children if I die. I know it will not be possible for you to keep them with you and I do not ask so much, but if anything happens to me please don't fail to see that they are properly provided for."

Malcolm showed the letter to both Martha and Gwendolyn.

"What a nuisance this is," said Martha. "These inconsiderate people fail to take care of themselves. They marry when they can't afford it. They bring children into the world whom they can't feed and clothe, and when they get ill and the possibility of death faces them they most coolly suggest that some one else should bear the brunt of their criminal negligence. My word, sick or not sick, Eileen shall hear what I have to say in the matter. I never mince matters, Gwendolyn. There is nothing to be gained in doing so."

"Eileen is only coming here on her way to the hospital Martha," Malcolm explained. "The most that I shall do for her is to get a good doctor to see her before she is admitted and—"

Martha cut him short quickly. "Only this morning you told me to be careful with the

money in the house as it would not be possible for you to get any more during the month. How on earth are you going to find the money to bring your sister from the station, to take her to the hospital and to pay the doctor's fees. If the doctor comes in after six o'clock you shall have to pay thirty two rupees. How easily you lie, Malcolm. Fancy, Gwen, these people have not written to me or to Malcolm for more than two years and yet they remember that we are alive when they need assistance. Really I don't wish to hurt Malcolm's feelings, believe me I don't, but I often think that if there is anything in heredity, one of his ancestors must have been a sponge."

"How can you be so unkind, Martha. I beg your pardon I have no right to say anything; but please do not drag me into these disputes."

"Gwendolyn I love you," Martha said, "and I'll give you a piece of advice. When you marry, never marry a man with relatives. They will spoil your life. Why I think the man who goes to an orphanage and picks out his wife from a parade of about forty or fifty girls is quite a sensible fellow. It is really a pity women are not allowed to exercise a similiar option."

Gwendolyn got up and walked out of the room.

"Martha," said Malcolm, "much as I would like to please you and meet your wishes



there are certain obligations which I must discharge and nothing will hinder me from discharging them. This is one of them. I told you I could not get any more money this month because the man from whom I get it at a fair rate of interest will not give me any more. He told me so definitely. I shall have to go elsewhere and pay an exorbitant rate of interest. One pice per day per rupee is what is asked : It's killing. Why Government does not introduce a law fixing a maximum rate of interest, say even twenty per cent per annum, on loans, I cannot imagine. I know thousands of men who have got into the hands of these money lenders and are still in their grip although they have paid the amount borrowed ten times over in interest alone."

"All this does not interest me in the least Malcolm, I am a practical woman and am concerned with how we are affected. You cannot deny what I said just now was not the truth. But I like peace Malcolm, and in order that there may be no unpleasantness I shall go away for to-morrow and the day after. I have an invitation to spend a few days at Chandernagore. You can keep your sister here for two days if you like, but don't let her be here when I return. You may make whatever excuse you like about my absence. Now confess that I am very reasonable. By the way I'll want at least about twenty rupees to take with me. One cannot go on a visit

anywhere without a pice in one's pocket ; and there's my fare to pay."

"Use what you have in the house Martha. I'll get some more before you return."

Martha left the same night for Chander-nagore and insisted on Gwendolyn's going with her and returning the next morning. "I would keep you with me dear," she said to Gwendolyn, "but someone must be in the house when Eileen arrives. Malcolm is helpless and hopeless. He will only make a mess of everything. You don't mind Gwendolyn, do you ? Be firm Gwendolyn and do not put up with any nonsense and see that no delay occurs in getting Eileen out of the way."

"I do wish you would stay back and do all this yourself, Martha. What right have I to interfere or to insist upon things being done?"

"The right that I give you Gwendolyn."

Malcolm's position that night was pitiable. He knew that if anything happened to his sister he would have to take over the children. What would be the result? He would soon be driven into the insolvency court and lose his appointment. He could not expect that Martha would make any retrenchment in their expenditure with a view to meeting in part the additional burden that would be thrown on him. While he was reflecting on this question his mind travelled in another direction. "That's it—that's it," he cried, "God's

vengeance has already befallen me. How I wish that Gwendolyn was here so that I might kneel before her and ask her to discontinue our evil relationship."

The next day he went to a money lender. He had considerable difficulty in raising the amount he required although it was quite a trifling sum and he was willing to undertake to repay it at the beginning of the next month. He borrowed seventy five rupees only but the man made him sign for three hundred.

Malcolm barely had time to meet the train by which Eileen arrived. When he returned home he found that Gwen had given up her own room and converted it into a sick chamber. All the boxes and almirahs had been removed. The cot had been moved into the middle of the room and a chair was placed on either side of the bed. In the right hand corner was a table covered with clean white linen and on it was placed a basin of hot water a clean towel and a soap tray. A small teapoy stood in the left hand corner obviously intended for the doctor to write his prescriptions and to keep the medicines.

Eileen had to be carried into the sick room. She was too weak to walk. She was crying with pain. He left her in charge of Gwendolyn and rushed away for the doctor. The doctor arrived and after very careful examination pronounced the case as very serious. "The patient is suffering from inflammation of the

left lung and obstruction of the kidneys" he said. "Take her away to the hospital at once. An operation is the only thing that is likely to save her, although I fear she is too weak to stand it."

Fortunately or unfortunately Eileen overheard what the doctor said. When Malcolm had seen the doctor out and returned to the sick room he was met by the determined declaration by Eileen that she would not go to the hospital. "I'd rather die here," she said, "than go to hospital. If you won't keep me send me back to my children at once. Let me die among them."

Malcolm was on the point of saying that he would only be too glad to have her with them for as long as she wished to stay in Calcutta but he thought of Martha and arrested the words which were already on his lips.

"Don't keep me in suspense Malcolm," said Eileen, "tell me what you are going to do." She spoke spasmodically, interrupted by groans of pain.

Instead of replying Malcolm turned and looked at Gwendolyn who was standing at his side.

She seemed at once to understand how he was placed. He saw the sympathy in her eyes.

"Malcolm," she said, "this is not a question you should decide for yourself. Get another doctor to see your sister. A good man. Tell him

of her aversion to go to hospital and of the pronouncement by Col: Swallow that she is too ill to stand the operation and ask him if he will undertake to pull her through. In the meantime I shall do all I can to relieve her."

Eileen groaned. She turned her head towards them and looking up to Gwendolyn said, "What a blessing there are such women as you in the world. You are making me feel better already."

Malcolm left the room. He felt that Gwendolyn's advice must be followed, but as he walked through the hall he was thinking of what Martha would say when she came back. He knew by experience that even the precarious condition of his sister would not prevent her from speaking out her mind. She always prided herself on being straight forward and plain-spoken. But this was not all that he was thinking of. There was something of far greater importance that was causing him the greatest anxiety and literally making his brain to thump. "Has the vengeance of God already fallen on me?" he moaned. "Is it too late to repent? Should I not repent at once. Should I not tell Gwendolyn of my repentance and ask her to forgive and forget?"

He was standing in the hall quite ready to go out. He had a stick in his hand. He stood with bowed head as if he were studying some inscription on the floor. He thought

of his father. In previous years whenever he was in great difficulties his father would appear to him in a dream and indicate to him the line of action he should take. Why had his father not appeared to him recently. Had he withdrawn himself because he disapproved of his alliance with Gwendolyn. He turned to look towards the sick room and was startled to find Gwendolyn standing behind him. Before he could speak a word she addressed him. "Malcolm," she said, "I know exactly what is passing through your mind. Don't let it hinder you Malcolm. Don't despair Malcolm. I will do all in my power to help and I shall pray to God and every thing will come right. Go my boy, go my sweetheart, go at once for the doctor," and she kissed him and hurried back to the room.

He felt a changed man. "Can I ever give up a creature like her?" he cried within himself. "No. Never."

Doctor Barthom an experienced and eminent physician was called in. Malcolm had fully explained the case to him on the way to the house. He confirmed Col: Swallow's diagnosis of the case in every detail, but he added this much. "As the patient is really too ill and weak to stand the strain of an operation I think we might see what medicine and careful nursing will do for her. I will give you a prescription. The medicine is to be given to her every hour and she should

be poulticed every half an hour over the loins. For the present neglect the pain over the lung. If as a result of this treatment the pain in the back ceases or is diminished she may be kept at home till the morning when I shall call again to see her. If it increases do not waste a minute's time. Hurry her away to the hospital at once. Please understand that it is only with considerable hesitation that I recommend this experiment. It is nothing else but an experiment and the only justification for it is the weak state the patient is in. The case is one in which an operation is clearly indicated, and it is always prudent to give the surgeon the best chance by avoiding delays. And by the way if you need me urgently ring up No. 6004. I'll come at once. Don't forget to employ a trained nurse for the night."

Malcolm told Eileen briefly that the doctor consented to her remaining at home till the morning. If she improved the doctor would undertake to treat her in the house but if she did not improve she would have to go to the hospital in the morning. "I'll send Gwendolyn to you," he added, "I have to go in search of a skilled nurse."

"No, no, Malcolm, this is all too much. I cannot put you to all the trouble and expense. I'll get away to hospital, unless, unless, I hardly like to suggest it Malcolm, unless Miss. Carpenter will consent to nurse me, she

has already done so while you were away for the doctor."

As he spoke Gwendolyn walked in. "It's all right Malcolm, I again know what you are thinking of. There is no need to ask me. I have already appointed myself as nurse here and as you are also a patient might I remind you that you have had nothing to eat since breakfast. Please go and take something Malcolm. You will find that every thing is ready for you. I have told both the servants Malcolm, that they must remain in the house for the night."

Gwendolyn sat up the whole night in attendance on Eileen. Malcolm also sat up in the same room on a lounge chair. Towards midnight Eileen fell asleep. The careful nursing had done her immense good. The doubts that Malcolm had early in the evening were quickly dispelled. As he watched Gwendolyn attending to his sister he said to himself for the hundreth time, "It is impossible. It is impossible to sin in loving this girl." Often they looked into one another's eyes but not a word passed between them. Towards morning Malcolm fell asleep and was a bit surprised when Gwendolyn awoke him and told him the doctor was in the hall.

After a few minutes' examination the doctor was able to say that the patient had improved considerably and that with careful attention she should be out of danger in a fortnight.



This was a great relief to Malcolm. When Eileen was informed of what the doctor had said she called Gwendolyn to her, "Miss Carpenter," she said, "I can think of you as nothing else but as a ministering angel. If it were not for you I would never have lived the night through. Nothing but your lovely nature could have persuaded you to do for me, a stranger, all that you have since I was brought here. I and my children shall be indebted to you for life. It is impossible for me to do anything that can adequately repay you for your kindness and attention to me, but I shall pray that you will soon find a very good man to love you and that you will soon be happily married."

"Thanks dear, but I have already found such a man."

"That's good. That's good, but really I don't think any one will be good enough for you, not even a fine fellow like Malcolm. How soon are you going to get married?"

"We'll talk of the matter some other day if you please. Now, drink your medicine and try to sleep. You must not talk too much."

When Martha returned that day she lost no time in reminding Malcolm that she had foretold that his sister would sponge on them and remain in the house. "You had no right Malcolm to permit Gwen to nurse her. I am sure she is suffering from some infectious disease. If anything happened to Gwendolyn

her mother would never forgive me. Besides she has not come here to slave but on a holiday. Her mother won't like to hear of this. I see that you have ordered more milk for the house in spite of having asked me a few months back to try and make a reduction in the milk bill. Of course there is no consideration for me, but your family must have everything. Send for Gwendolyn I want to speak to her."

Malcolm went into the sick room and told Gwendolyn that Martha wished to see her.

"You shan't attend to that fussy creature any longer Gwendolyn, till you get your mother's permission. Who knows what disease she is suffering from."

"How absurd Martha. She will only need my attention for a day or two more. It is impossible to obtain Mother's permission in time. I know Mother will not object to it."

"Very well Gwendolyn, I have told you my views."

That evening Eileen asked Malcolm why Martha had not come to see her and Malcolm had to tell her a deliberate and lame lie. "She's not feeling at all well Eileen, no doubt she'll see you to-morrow." When three days later Eileen repeated the question and Malcolm hesitated in making a reply, she said, "Forgive me Malcolm, I should have understood without asking and hurting your feelings; please make arrangements for me to be removed to-day to Charles' place."

The removal threw her considerably back. For days she lay between life and death and all through those anxious days Malcolm again underwent the trying ordeal of hearing the oft repeated voice within him warning him, before it was too late, to give up Gwendolyn.

A few nights later, Martha went out herself and Gwendolyn and Malcolm were left at home alone. They sat side by side on the sofa in the hall, their hands linked, and they talked of their love for one another. Malcolm told her that at times he felt very sorry that a good and pure girl like her should have fallen in love with him, a married man, and he urged her to give him up before it was too late. He assured her that she would soon meet some one more worthy than he and that she was sure to obtain happiness, as she deserved it.

In reply Gwendolyn said, "Malcolm dear although I have loved no man before, I really often wish to get married, if only to set an example to my sisters. Every one of them has, in my opinion, behaved most shamefully to her husband and without exception every one of them has a good husband. Of course Malcolm not one of them is as good as you. Even if I had a brute of a husband I would behave so kindly and patiently and tenderly to him that I am sure I would convert him. I would attend to all his wants, I would study his wishes and anticipate them. I would be so good, so obedient,

so loving, and so yielding that I am sure he would love me in return and that he would never want to leave me or be away from home. Why do men so frequently leave their houses and spend their time at clubs and restaurants? It is because their wives don't make the home attractive. My word, I would just like to teach my sisters a lesson."

"You are thinking of some fairy tales or novels you have read Gwendolyn dear. These things don't happen in actual life. Nobody could have entered upon married life more determined to make it happy than I. I had very high ideals, higher perhaps than even yours. I believed in keeping to the very letter of the marriage vow. Have you ever read the marriage vows carefully? Please do dear when you have the time. I resolved never to say a rude or unkind word to Martha. Do you remember your request on my wedding day? I was determined that even if Martha did not come up to my ideals at first, my patience, my forbearance, my unselfishness, my thoughtfulness, my consideration for her, would gradually make her see the direction in which true happiness lay. But in spite of all my efforts, in spite of my following this plan of action unwaveringly for years, without turning to look back once, every thing has gone wrong. Gwendolyn you really cannot imagine how wrong things have gone. You are the first and only person that has under-

stood me and I almost feel, darling, that I love you because of that. It is bad enough, in fact it is a downright shame for a husband to strike his wife, but what would you think dear of a wife who strikes her husband?"

"Malcolm, surely you do not mean to suggest that Martha has raised her hand to you. She is too good for that Malcolm."

"She has done so thrice already Gwendolyn. The third time she did it I warned her that she should not forgive her if she again attempted to raise her hand to me. But don't think, darling, that I have mentioned all this to you by way of complaint. I have never complained to any one and I shall never complain, Gwen. I have told you this in order to show you that the consummation of happiness is impossible if the effort is only on one side. Do you know I could bear any suffering, any trial in the world except one."

"And what is that, Malcolm?"

"It is to see you wedded, as you mentioned to a brute; of course if you ever got married I should never come near you. I could not trust myself in your presence because I shall always love you, and time will only assist in making my love grow deeper and stronger. But I shall have means of being informed of your welfare, and if your husband, God forbid that such a thing should ever take place, should ill-treat you and strike you, I'll kill him. Yes Gwen-

dolyn I'll do so even if I had to burn in a thousand hells thereafter."

"Malcolm you almost tempt me to ask you to find a husband for me. Yes Malcolm, you are more experienced than I am. You know men better than I. You are a clever man and a careful student of character. No, no, don't contradict me," she said as he was about to interrupt. "I have no father to give me advice on so important a matter. Believe me I shall prefer to remain single and love and cherish you but I shall never marry unless with your consent. Almost I feel like asking you, Malcolm, to pick out a husband for me. Now there don't take the last portion seriously. I was only teasing you. I solemnly, promise you Malcolm that I shall consult you before accepting any one."

"Thank you Gwendolyn," he said, "you will do well to keep to that promise. I know how inexperienced and innocent you are Gwen. Really it is a mystery to me how you have been left alone for all these years. Don't think I doubt what you told me about no man before me having kissed you. I happened to be awake the night after you arrived at Calcutta, when you and Martha returned from the opera and Martha stayed downstairs and you came up with Mr. Ray and he was pleading with you to give him a kiss and I heard how gently but firmly you refused him and how you told him that you had never before allowed a man to kiss

you and never intended to. But it is impossible to judge every man or woman in this respect. The prudent person works on averages. Do you know that there is only one woman in a million who has not kissed a man before she's seventeen, and only one man in a thousand who has not had some 'affair,' to use Martha's expression, before his marriage?"

"Malcolm dear," she said, "I never thought you knew about Mr. Ray. I see now that I should have told you. I did intend to tell you sometime Malcolm. Please don't be angry with me Malcolm, but I have kept something else from you. My object in doing so was merely to spare you pain, but after all that you have told me just now, I must tell it to you. While we were at Darjeeling a young man named Talbot was introduced to me by Martha. I don't know if you have ever seen him. Malcolm dear believe me, I never like to think unkindly of people and I would not have analysed my thoughts and feelings about this man if his sister had not told me that he was in love with me and wanted to marry me, but that he was too timid to speak to me lest I should refuse him. Malcolm he was not a man but a manikin. He was less than four feet in height and with the face—no I must not be rude. His voice was squeaky and he could never speak unless to answer questions put to him. He is said to be very clever and very well off. But I could do nothing

else but pity such a creature. But yet Malcolm I could not be rude to any one and so it happened that much as I disliked him he was always my companion. He seemed to haunt me. Wherever I went he met me and he would walk alongside of me as if he were my walking stick. Both his sister and Martha seemed to encourage his behavior. They cajoled him on three occasions into buying tickets for all of us to the theatre and on all these occasions he sat next to me. And oh! how miserable I felt Malcolm, for he did nothing else but stare at me the whole time and when I did turn round to speak to him he would hang his head and remain silent, and sometimes Malcolm I fancy that his very knees were shaking. Would you believe it he brought some chocolates with him to the theatre and instead of offering them to me he threw them into my lap when the curtain was down and almost gave me a fright? I thought a lizard had dropped from the roof. One day I went up alone to the Mall to buy some wool for Martha. I had hardly got up half way when Mr. Talbot accosted me. He walked by my side the whole way, up and down, without a word. Malcolm don't think me rude but I did punish him on that occasion. Other times I used to speak and try to make conversation but after what his sister told me I determined to end our acquaintance or at least to show him that he should cease to molest me in the way he did. So I did not



say a word to him but I walked up the hill as fast as I could. Really it was a pitiable sight to see him attempting to keep pace with me. He had to put four steps to my one and he began to puff like a blacksmith's bellows. At one time I felt inclined in sheer pity to slacken my speed but I argued that he came uninvited, and if he could not keep the pace the remedy lay in his own hands, or rather I should say in his feet, to drop back and leave me. But he continued running and panting to the obvious amusement of every one who saw us. It was with great difficulty that I kept myself from laughing. He had an easier time on the return journey as it was down hill but the pace must have tired his knees. When we neared our house I turned to him and said, "Mr. Talbot, I am sure you want to ask me something. How silly of you to follow me like this without saying a word. Come now what is it you want to say."

"I naturally expected him to ask me to marry him, when I would have definitely refused him and have had done with all the unpleasantness I was being subjected to; but oh, Malcolm, would you believe it, he trembled and grinned, oh! so like the grin—no, again I wont say it,—and showing his white teeth said, *Miss Carpenter, I wanted to ask you to come to the theatre again.* All I could do was to laugh. I wished him good morning and ran into the house."

"Martha met me and to my surprise Mr. Talbot's sister was there also. Gwendolyn, Martha addressed me, I am so glad to see you are happy; running for very joy, eh!" Do you know dear that both of us planned everything? We sent you out on a pretext to buy the wool and it was arranged that Mr. Talbot should meet you and ask you to marry him. But why didn't you bring the poor fellow in with you? too shy eh? All girls will be like that I suppose. But he promised to give us a treat. We must see that he does not back out."

"I have had enough of this Martha, I said, My life up here has been a misery with that man constantly molesting me. I only kept quiet and appeared cheerful in order to be agreeable. I should have a very nice holiday here if it were not for him."

"Martha became very angry, she told me I was ungrateful, that the man worshipped me, that I would get all I wanted if I married him, that he was a Registrar. A Registrar getting six hundred rupees a month. Think of that, she said, and besides he has heaps of money. She called me a stupid girl. What could make you behave in this foolish fashion she enquired. Has Malcolm been asking you to save his brother's reputation by marrying him? My God! she said I'll sooner kill you than allow you to marry that base vagabond and villain."

"I told Martha in reply that I did not care to discuss the question of whom I shall marry,

with them, but I added definitely that if there were only two men in the world to-morrow, one Mr. Talbot and the other Charles, and I was compelled to marry, I should unhesitatingly marry Charles."

"That's it, that's it, my dear Miss Hollo-way, Martha said, my scheming husband has polluted this girl's ideas. My word! he shall suffer for this; I will choke the life out of him when I get back."

"So much for the story Malcolm, but now about your proposal: Malcolm dear, now that I love you I so long to be single, to continue to love and worship you and you alone. But you know more of the world Malcolm and I shall be guided by you. If you insist on my getting married, I shall be happy and marry your brother Charles. I have seen him only once but I like him very much Malcolm; and Malcolm, if I marry him wont you come and see us often. But don't take any definite steps for a year Malcolm. Give me a year my love to see how I feel in this new experience. And, oh, Malcolm don't think me silly and absurd but let me ask you just one question?"

"Do so by all means dear," he replied.

"Malcolm are you not the one in the thousand you spoke of."

They had both stood up. He looked her full in the face.

"Don't answer me Malcolm dear." Don't she pleaded. "I should have known it without asking you. I love you all the more for it."

## CHAPTER XII.

### **The Five Years' limit.**

Eileen had hardly left when Martha's sister Ethel came to visit the Wensleys. She lived in an out of the way place and ran into Calcutta for a month to make her purchases and to see a bit of life. She had four children and she brought them all with her. It was quite a new experience to Malcolm to have four little children running about the house and their merry tattle infused a new sort of life in him. "My word," he said to Gwendolyn, "when they were alone, "how I do wish I could have children of my own. When I was once asked how many children I thought a man should have, I replied at least eleven boys, so that he can play them as a football team."

"You don't seem to care at all for girls Malcolm," she remarked saucily.

"I care for only one dear," he replied.

It had been arranged that Martha was to accompany Gwendolyn on her return journey, but with Ethel in the house this arrangement was completely upset and Martha insisted on Malcolm's going to leave her.

The night before her departure when Gwendolyn came into his room she knelt beside his bed and pleaded, "Malcom dear, Martha is

asleep, let me stay with you, the thought that we shall soon be separated is driving me mad."

"No darling," he replied, "I cannot consent to your running any risks on my account. Be advised sweetheart and go away. I am just as anxious to have you with me as you are to stay, but we must be careful. Only if we are prudent we can hope to continue our present pleasant relations for any length of time. If anything is detected or suspected, our projected trip to Bombay, will be spoilt. Have patience darling. Besides I can never face the thought of your being compromised in any way."

She stood up and looked at him. Her eyes were filled with tears. "Malcolm," she said, "for all these years I have never known what it is to love a man or to be loved by one. Now when it has come to me I am so woefully unfortunate that the man I love can never be anything more to me than a lover. I always find the world a hard and cruel one Malcolm, some people have all the good things in the world and others none at all or very little."

He could not bear the sight of her sorrowful countenance so he turned his face away. At this she placed her hands on his shoulders. "Forgive me Malcolm," she said, "don't think I will regret for one moment falling in love with you or anything I have done or allowed you to do. I have never known such happiness before. I know it now. But I want to have more Malcolm, that's all. We are all like that Malcolm. We are never contented."

He folded her in his arms. "You are a woman in a million," he said. "Now go away little girl."

They spent a most enjoyable time during the journey to Bombay. They were alone the whole way. When they were nearing Bombay, Gwendolyn became peculiarly silent. Malcolm understood at once that she was already feeling the bitter pang of the impending separation. "Oh darling," she said, "whatever will I do without you. My life will be a positive blank sweetheart. Do make excuses and come now and then to Bombay to see me, my precious love."

But this in itself did not trouble Malcolm very much as he felt sure that time would heal the wound, but what made him very anxious about the future was a statement Gwendolyn made a few minutes before. He had just released her from a passionate embrace when he noticed, for the first time, that she was hot and flushed and that her breathing was quick and heavy. "Malcolm dear," she exclaimed almost breathlessly, "if this is married life, how I wish I could be married," and he very foolishly made a quick and thoughtless reply. "It is much more than this darling, but we had better not continue this conversation." But he began to fear lest he should have aroused in her a passion she had not previously felt or been aware of. Before the journey ended, therefore, he spoke to her once more on

the question of her marriage. "You have promised, darling," he said, "to be mine for a year and also that you will never marry without my consent and only to a person I approve of. I thank you very much for this evident expression of your regard and confidence in me. The coming year will indeed be a very happy one for me, but girlie I must look to your permanent welfare and happiness and once again I tell you, darling, don't consider me if you meet any one you think you love and who wishes to marry you."

"Malcolm dear don't let us talk of this," she replied, "I cannot say I am engaged to you. Can I? But I am mortgaged for a year. Now kiss me again Malcolm and hold me in your strong and loving arms and let me lay my head on your breast and let me think of you only Malcolm. And don't release me Malcolm until we are at our destination. I cannot bear to be away from you. I am sure I will go mad, Malcolm, when you have to return. I wish I can spend the rest of my life alone with you in a railway carriage or a ship or a balloon with nothing else to think of but ourselves and our love for one another."

He was only too glad to do what she asked but to their mutual regret the journey came to an end all too soon.

As he was getting out of the carriage a distressing accident occurred. A large iron cash chest was accidentally dropped on him

and crushed his hand. Mrs. Carpenter had come to the station and insisted on removing him to her place although he pleaded very much to be sent to the hospital.

A room in Mrs. Carpenter's flat was converted into a sick chamber and Malcolm was told by the doctor, who had been sent to see him, that an operation would have to be performed and he would have to lie up for a fortnight. "I shall make Gwendolyn take a fortnight's leave Malcolm," said Mrs. Carpenter, "to help in nursing you. You see Doctor Cherry says that you must be very carefully watched and attended until the fever leaves you."

As may be imagined the idea of lying in bed for a fortnight, with so excellent and agreeable a nurse as Gwendolyn in attendance, was gratifying in the extreme to Malcolm. Why he almost wished it could have been possible for him to spend the remainder of his life under these conditions.

Mrs. Carpenter nursed Malcolm by day and Gwendolyn by night. The arrangement was proposed by Mrs. Carpenter in view of the fact that Gwendolyn was very busy during the days practicing some children for an important concert. Gwendolyn used to sit in an easy chair placed near Malcolm's bed. She would permit him to talk very little. She did all the talking herself. Almost all the time he was awake she would be stroking his hair. Now and then she would bend forward and kiss him, placing her



sweet lips gently to his. When he was tired of lying down he would stand up and immediately, as if by inspiration, Gwendolyn would fly into his arms and rest her pretty shapely head on his broad chest. Often when she supposed that he was asleep, and here it must be stated that Malcolm often pretended to be asleep, she would fall on her knees beside his bed and kiss his brow and his hands. For fear of waking him her actions were extremely gentle and noiseless. Gwendolyn did not sleep a moment during all the time she was on duty. Malcolm knew this because whenever he awoke he met her bright loving eyes gazing full at him and with a pleasant smile and a cheery voice she would enquire, "How are you feeling now darling, better?"

One night Malcolm asked Gwendolyn for writing materials as he wanted to write to Martha. Gwendolyn brought him her writing pad and fountain pen. In handing him the writing pad she said, "Be careful of it Malcolm and don't give it into mother's hands. I keep some of the things that are most precious to me in the world under the flap of this little pad. Now I'll leave you alone. Call me when you have finished. You'll find stamps in the slit on the left cover of the pad."

While Malcolm was midway through his letter the pad dropped from his hand. As he picked up its contents, which were scattered on

the floor, he noticed that Gwendolyn had preserved both his letters to her, of course he had expected this, but what caused him not a little anxiety, was the sight of another letter written in a shaky and microscopic hand. Of course he could not read it or examine it, but one sentence or a part of it caught his eye. "Surely you understand me very much better to know that I would raise no objection," and he had seen that it was from a gentleman who subscribed himself, "Yours very sincerely, Dan Moneybag."

Not only was he grievously troubled as to the reason for her preserving this letter but he kept asking himself repeatedly, "Who could the man be who has a right to reprove her. Why even I would never do so."

But it is not to be imagined that her continual presence in his room in perfect seclusion and free from the possibility of being surprised was not a source of danger. Indeed he realised the very first night that it was a most dangerous arrangement for both of them to be left alone like that. Of course Mrs. Carpenter was not to be blamed. She did not for a moment suspect that they were in love with one another and she believed in the uprightness of their characters. Nor yet was Gwendolyn to blame. She was perfectly pure and innocent-minded. She was so innocent of evil that she made it a practice to say her prayers every night at the foot of his bed and she would say

among other supplications "And please God restore my precious Malcolm to health and strength." It was Malcolm who was in fault. He was solely and wholly to blame. He knew his feelings and he had no right to persuade himself that he could withstand the temptations which must necessarily befall him. There were times when he realised that if he wished to behave as a true gentleman he should have packed his trunks and cleared out at once and that more readily should he have done so if he really loved Gwendolyn. But once again it was a question of inclination *versus* duty. His passionate and absorbing love for Gwendolyn and the ecstasy of feeling which he experienced as a result of her kind and loving treatment attracted him to her as forcibly as the moth is drawn to the candle. But the blow which he swore to himself he would avoid at all costs, if for no other reason than to maintain the love and respect of his idol, fell all too quickly and suddenly. It was about ten o'clock on the fourth night of his stay in Bombay. Mrs. Carpenter had just bid him good night and retired to her bed room. He stood up as Gwendolyn entered and she flew into his outstretched arms. He pressed her passionately to him and imprinted kiss after kiss on her lips, on her eyes, and on her mouth. To Malcolm she seemed on this occasion to be more yielding and responsive than ever before. She pressed herself to him and held him tightly round the neck. "Don't ever leave me Malcolm," she entreated. "Don't ever

leave me. It will kill me. To be like this with you for the rest of my life is more than all I ever desire in the world. Hold me to you Malcolm—Press me tighter and tighter dear.”

Malcolm could never say what actually happened to his reason. He released himself from her embrace almost rudely and pushed her away and looking at her fiercely, his eyes wide open, and his chest heaving rapidly, he addressed her in an almost cruel tone. “Impossible. Impossible. Have you no feelings Gwendolyn? Are you also like Martha, cold as stone? You think that I shall be satisfied with anything less than possessing you completely. Don’t forget that above everything else I am a man. You shall and must be mine.”

His behaviour completely upset Gwendolyn. She had never dreamt that he could fly into such a passion. The look in his eyes frightened her. It was all so unexpected. She was trembling like a leaf. She, who would always say that she had the courage to go out alone at midnight in search of a ghost. But this was not all, for when Malcolm had stopped speaking and she looked at him and saw his eyes in a blaze she uttered a low and painful shriek.

Malcolm immediately leaped into his bed. He realised that Mrs. Carpenter would come in to ascertain what had occurred. Turning to Gwen he whispered, “Don’t say anything to your mother I will explain the situation away but try and forgive me. I was a brute.”

She looked at him in love and tenderness.

When Mrs. Carpenter came in he explained that he had attempted to get up from his cot and had fallen back and that this had upset Gwendolyn completely and she screamed out.

Mrs. Carpenter turned from him to Gwendolyn. "You are looking ill my child," she said, "I thought you were stronger than this. Go and lie down. For the next few days I shall do the night duty and you shall attend to Malcolm during the day."

This was just what Malcolm had wished for as he felt convinced that it would hereafter be impossible for Gwendolyn to remain alone with him during the night.

Gwendolyn came up to his bed and placed her hand on his forehead and said, "Good night Malcolm. I am so sorry to have behaved so stupidly. I feel like a naughty school girl being turned out like this but I shall come to you early in the morning and relieve Ma."

He pressed her hand and looking up to her bade her good night.

It was scarcely five when she came in the next morning. She was dressed in a white and pink frock and although a trifle pale looked as beautiful as ever. "Mother dear," she said, "go and have some rest. I am feeling quite well."

Mrs. Carpenter got up and fearing to disturb Malcolm went out of the room noiselessly. She had hardly left when Gwendolyn fell on

her knees beside his cot and bent over to kiss him.

He opened his eyes and looked at her.

"You scamp," she said, "you are awake."

He shut his eyes and replied, "No darling, I am fast asleep. Believe that I am, and do what you wanted when you thought I was asleep."

She pressed her lips to his and then got up and sat on the side of his bed.

After what had happened the previous night Malcolm felt a bit strange. He so wanted to apologise for his misbehaviour but did not know how to begin. He was so afraid of hurting her feelings. He actually felt inclined to "kick himself" for letting his passions get the better of him on the previous day. While he was yet in this thoughtful frame of mind Gwendolyn put her hand into his and said "Malcolm I am sure darling I can guess what you are thinking of. Please don't distress yourself, my boy."

"Gwendolyn my love," he said, "you must forgive me. I was a brute to forget myself. Say that you forgive me."

"Don't talk of forgiveness Malcolm. When you first spoke and I noticed the passion in your eyes I thought you were very wicked and I was horrified. That is why I screamed. But Malcolm dear I have been awake the whole night thinking and thinking about the matter

and I feel differently or at least in a measure differently. I do so want to tell you Malcolm what decision I have come to, so don't make my task too difficult by talking of forgiveness. I do so wish that in all our lives there will never be any necessity for me to forgive you or for you to forgive me. You see as we really and truly love one another it is impossible, yes, absolutely impossible for either of us to ever act in disregard of the true interests of the other. Isn't this so Malcolm?" She paused for an answer.

"My poor child," he said, "My poor child I am so sorry for your lot. You deserve much more than the love of a poor creature like myself but don't let me interrupt you sweetheart, please tell me all."

"As I said Malcolm, I lay awake the whole night thinking of what you said, and, Malcolm dear, believe me that I am sure I feel better that you should have spoken than that you should have suppressed your feelings. I know Malcolm all that you have suffered. I know you are a good boy. I know you would not do any one an injury, therefore I believe that what you said, you said without in any way desiring to injure me. If you cannot injure others, however is it possible that you can ever injure me. What then I argued within myself made you speak as you did. Nothing else but your love for me. Don't say it is anything else Malcolm.

I could not believe anything else of you. Can I ever forget that you practically told me that you are the one man in every thousand. Have I not eyes to see in what relation you and Martha stand to one another and have possibly always stood. And don't I remember that you said that above everything else you are a man. Malcolm dear, believe me sweetheart I love you all the more for expressing your true feelings. I would never be happy for a moment if I thought you kept back anything from me. Never be afraid Malcolm to speak out your feelings to me. As I firmly believe that you love me above everything else on earth, I cannot but expect that you will always look to my best interests. And now Malcolm to come to the point. My darling, what would I not give, what sacrifice would I not make to be able to do what you ask. Could anything be more gratifying to me or indeed more sacred than that I should belong wholly and entirely to you. But, Malcolm we are Christians and how can it be. No, dear it cannot be. I will do anything on earth for you but forsake my God. Believe me Malcolm, believe me," and she stopped choked with tears.

He was struck dumbfounded. He could only gaze up at her in wonderment.

"Why don't you speak Malcolm. Why are you so silent. Speak, speak, darling to me the thoughts of your heart. Do you agree with me? If you don't, tell me all that you have in



your mind. Let us discuss it and see if we cannot come to some agreement. Don't be afraid of hurting me Malcolm. The time has passed for that."

It was a long time before he could trust himself to speak. When he did his voice was hoarse and he could only stammer out what he had to say.

"Gwendolyn," he began, "I would do anything than hurt your feelings, dear, but I have no right to pretend to agree with you, when I don't. I know you will never forgive insincerity on my part. I have no right to pretend to you to be what I am not. I am not an atheist. You know that for years I was a very religious man. I never did anything without first praying to God. But ever since my marriage everything has somehow gone wrong. I would be a coward if I put the blame for this change on Martha. I know that I am responsible in a great degree for it. I had no right to build up high and lofty ideals and expect Martha to come up to them. I had no right to bring her into contact with my relatives one after another, because as she has very pointedly reminded me time after time she married me and not my family; but rightly or wrongly my religious feelings have undergone a change. At times I have doubted the existence of a God. But the old training has not died in me. It will die hard. Yet I cannot with any conscience

say that I am anything like what I was. Briefly I am in doubt. Everything around me especially the glories and wonders of nature remind me of a Wonderful Creator, a Supreme Architect. But everything also reminds me that the Creator is an unchangeable God who has ordained certain laws the violation of which involve certain penalties. I am by nature and creation a man. I wanted to have a wife, I wanted to have children. There was and is nothing wrong in my desires. I have been married now for all these years, but what is Martha to me? Am I to remain like this for ever? No, no, I cannot see that I am bound to, nor was it ever intended that I should. Therefore I want you. And I see nothing wrong in possessing you. Of course there is the world to think of, the cruel bitter world which says, do anything you like but take care you are not found out. This is the one and only commandment that the world asks you to obey. There are millions who are breaking every one of the ten commandments every hour and yet they hold their heads up and move about as respectable people, as they have not been found out. Gwendolyn, forgive me for asking you dear, I know that your chief reason for coming to the decision you have is your religious feeling in the matter, but tell me dear, have you not been partly influenced by the fear of the world discovering your secret and of the consequences."

"How can I say no, Malcolm. As I told you I considered the subject quite fully. How could I have forgotten to consider two factors of such great importance."

"Now, Gwendolyn," he said, "I am perfectly convinced that whatever your feelings are at present you yourself in course of time will not be satisfied to remain as you are. You, yourself will long to be more to me. Now, why should we not effect a compromise between our views. You say most definitely that you will never marry anyone except me. Have you fully realised that humanly speaking you will never be able to marry me. Now I must again tell you, and in this I must be quite emphatic, that if ever you meet a person you think you will be happy with and he wishes to marry you, you are not to consider that you are held to any promise except to consult me. You are a free woman, free to love me as long as you wish, free to marry another whenever you wish, but once more I repeat that if you marry a man and he illtreats you there will be murder in my heart. But to return to the point of my proposal. Will you agree that we should abide absolutely by your views for five full years. At the end of that time my views are to prevail. It is a long time Gwendolyn. Five years is a long time and who knows that by the end of five years I myself might be converted to your views, or you might be married, or I might be dead, or a thousand and one other things might happen.

But if we are yet sweethearts and if I am still of the same opinion as I now am, then if you now agree to this proposal, I shall expect you to keep to your promise."

"You are too good to me Malcolm. How can I do otherwise than agree, which other man similarly situated would think of behaving so unselfishly as you. I agree, I agree, darling, and I swear to you here and now that I shall keep to my part of the bargain. I know you will keep to yours. Now having come to this agreement at your suggestion let me also, darling, make a subsidiary suggestion. It is just this. To avoid any inconvenience of feeling between us, because of our present divergent views, let us agree that the matter will never in any circumstances again be mentioned in conversation between us until the full five years have passed. Even if my and your views change in the *interim* let us keep our own counsel, who knows they may change more than once during this period. At the end of five years you can come to me and claim me and you will find me ready for you because I shall never marry any one else. Come, kiss me darling, and let us be happy. Five years may seem a long time but they will fly quickly."

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### **Another Resolution.**

The three remaining days of the fortnight were very happy ones. Gwendolyn was with him throughout the day except for short intervals when she left to have her meals and change her frocks. It was not surprising that at the end of the period he was much improved in health and spirits. Doctor Cherry was able to tell him that he may get about a little.

"By the way Mr. Wensley," he asked, "when do you leave Bombay?"

"In a fortnight Doctor."

"In that case I should advise you to have early dinner every evening and to spend a couple of hours on the beach. The sea air is very refreshing and invigorating. Take in as much as you can of it. You don't get sea air in Calcutta."

Gwendolyn had to return to school that day but it was arranged that she and Malcolm should go out every evening to the beach.

"I would gladly accompany you," said Mrs. Carpenter, "but I have so much to attend to in the house. It's not like the old times Malcolm, when I had five and six servants at my command. As you see I can only afford to keep one servant, he has to do everything

including taking Gwendolyn's breakfast to school, but how much can he do. I must help him. Gwendolyn I know would gladly help but her work at school and correcting exercises at home leave her very little time for recreation. Besides she never goes about like other girls. It is a great opportunity for her to have a little recreation in going out with you."

Malcolm expressed regret that Mrs. Carpenter could not find it possible to go out with them but although he tried to persuade himself that in doing so he sincerely meant what he said he could not help feeling that he would not half enjoy the outing if she accompanied them.

Many were the subjects that Malcolm and Gwendolyn discussed while they lolled lazily side by side on the sands.

Often he would look into her eyes and off and on he would press her slim hands.

One of the subjects that Malcolm and Gwendolyn discussed was Jealousy. The discussion arose in the following manner.

"You know Malcolm," said Gwendolyn, "I have such a lot to tell you. I did not like to speak too much all these days as the doctor was persistent that you were to keep quiet and not be allowed to speak too much."

"My dear girl you are every bit a woman. If you had to do the talking surely I would have kept quiet."

“Don’t tease me Malcolm dear,” she pouted. “It’s only a way I have of expressing myself.”

“And a very sweet way too indeed,” he remarked. “I wish I could kiss you for it but there are too many people about.”

“First let me tell you Malcolm that two of my best lady friends have repeatedly told me, ever since I returned from Calcutta, that they are sure I am in love. Miss McGuire, I have spoken to you about her often, always tells me that she is so proud of me since I have come back. Times without number she remarks Oh! Gwendolyn dear what a changed girl you are since your return from Calcutta. She says that she is so glad I went there, that Calcutta and Darjeeling brought out all the fine points in me which previously lay latent and were in danger of atrophy. She said that she often suspects me of having fallen in love but as we are such close friends she is sure I would not keep so important an event in my life from her. But she will have that I have changed and changed very much for the better. She says that my voice is softer, and that my movements are more graceful. That I pay considerably more attention to my dress and toilet, especially my hair. That I decorate it by wearing a pad and a net now, and seldom dress my hair two days running in the same fashion, that I have taken to powdering my face, a thing which every lady should do but which I never did before, and that I now wear

earrings which suit me so admirably. She also said that she had noticed that I have such a number of new frocks. It is no secret she said that the young men are now beginning to look at me. Malcolm you don't think me vain or wicked in telling you all this. Do you? I do so like to tell you everything in my life Malcolm. I cannot feel happy if I don't and I am just repeating exactly what Agnes said."

"It is a pleasure to hear you speak like this. It's quite unique. Go on my dear girl." said Malcolm.

"Malcolm she said that she noticed that on more than one occasion Mr. Baren, she calls him a prig, went home with me in the car, a thing he never did before, and that Mr. Joseph the First Assistant Master runs off to consult me on the slightest excuse. She says that he seems to have very suddenly discovered that I am well informed on most subjects. But this is not all she told me. She said that Mr. Moneybag told her the other day that although he had seen me so often yet only recently he had been struck with my beauty. Of course Malcolm I told her that I could not believe that she was in earnest about Mr. Moneybag. What she said about the others was quite true. But she only smiled and kissing me said that she was really very proud of me."

"But would you believe it Malcolm, I had the



next day, after she told me this, to go to Taraporevala's to buy some books for the school children. Mr. Moneybag is working in this firm. Don't look at me Malcolm, I did not go to see him. He came up to me directly I entered the shop, and after getting me what I required, he insisted on my going into his office room and having something to drink. He always does this when Miss McGuire and I go there, and she finds some excuse to go there often, Malcolm. No. Malcolm I don't accompany her whenever she goes. I asked him to excuse me Malcolm, but he pressed me so that not liking to hurt his feelings I consented."

"Did you say he pressed you?"

"Oh Malcolm what a scamp you are. No one can press me except you darling. While I was having my drink he asked me why I didn't have my photo taken, a side view mind. He said that the last time I went to register my name for the Times of India, Special Number, there was a gentleman standing with him who is a photographer and who, immediately I left, went into raptures over me."

"Don't tease me Mr. Moneybag I said. No Miss Carpenter he replied, Miss McGuire saw me the same day and I am afraid I made a false step because instead of telling her the opinion of the artist, I gave it as my own. Malcolm dear when he said this I could not help blushing. I did not know whether I was standing on my head or my feet. Don't pull my leg

Mr. Moneybag I remarked. Malcolm don't look at me like that, I didn't mean to be slang, but I had spoken before I was aware I was doing so. You see Malcolm I am telling you all, I can keep nothing from you. As long as I am true to you and don't misbehave myself why should I."

"I have said more than once darling that you are a woman in a million," Malcolm remarked. "Come just pass your hand here and let me kiss it while you relate the rest of the story. It is a great pleasure to me to hear you speak and to gaze into your face."

"Where did I leave off Malcolm. Oh I remember. Well Mr. Moneybag quickly interrupted me. Not at all. Not at all Miss Carpenter he said. To prove that he is in earnest the photographer has offered to take your photograph for half the usual price. You see he wants copies of them for his studio. And Malcolm, Mr. Moneybag was actually so kind as to offer to take me for the sittings and then, when I hesitated, he seems to have understood why, and offered to advance the money for a month or two. He is a perfect gentleman, Malcolm."

When Gwendolyn made this remark she gently touched Malcolm on the arm.

"My dear girl I thought you agreed to apply to me whenever you required any assistance," he said.

"I did Malcolm but this instance was quite special. I am sorry I did not tell you at the time, but I assented to Mr. Moneybag's proposal because, believe me Malcolm, I so wanted to give you a surprise for your birthday. You remember I asked you to guess what I was going to send you for your birthday, and you very sillily replied that it was so hot that in consideration I had ordered a couple of desk fountains from Iron & Co. Mother of course would never have heard of my incurring the expenditure and as I intended to ask you for the money, when I sent you the photo, I didn't think it necessary to do so at the time. But Malcolm a misunderstanding occured somewhere. I told Mr. Moneybag that I only wanted post card photos. They are five rupees a dozen, but the proofs sent to me were full size ones. The charge for it is twentyfour rupees the dozen. Of course when I told Mr. Moneybag he took all the blame on himself and offered to pay the difference. He is a perfect gentleman Malcolm. But I would not agree as I knew you would not like it. And I have done another foolish thing, Malcolm, I have already written to some of my friends promising to send them copies of my photo for Christmas. So, in all, I have to get two dozen Malcolm, which will cost fortyeight rupees. I know all your expenses. How very wicked I am to plunge you into further debt. Mr. Moneybag will arrange to take his advance back in instalments. Malcolm, say you don't

think me naughty or vain. I'll never do anything again without consulting you, Malcolm. I've got into all this trouble because I didn't consult you,"

"It's all right dear," he remarked, but his voice was a bit strained. "The first thing for you to do is to pay for the photos at once. I obtained sufficient money to pay the doctor for a month and hence have something to spare. I'll give you the money when we get home. Come my girl its getting late and your mother will be anxious if we delayed."

"Malcolm don't hurry away to-day. I'll explain to mother that we were talking and forgot the time, but tell me Malcolm, you are not jealous are you because of all I told you this evening. Have I been in any way wrong, my boy, in allowing Mr. Baren to come home with me in the car, or in my relations with Mr. Joseph and Mr. Moneybag? Before you answer I must explain one or two matters to you Malcolm."

"Mr. Baren, on the last occasion he went home with me, asked me if I would go out for a moonlight bicycle ride with him. Of course I declined. He told me that I was a fool to lock myself up in the house and miss all the pleasures of life because I happened to be in love. I laughed at this and he said, don't laugh; he called me by my Christian name, and said tell your young man or for the matter of that your old man, what I had to say. I

told him that I would certainly do so and that I was sure you would treat him with contempt. What do you think he replied Malcolm. He said, that that was only telling him you were afraid of him. Really Malcolm he deserves to have his neck wrung. If you were in good health I would ask you to do it. At any rate I told him that as he didn't seem to have any manners I didn't wish him to speak to me again. Mr. Joseph does not count, Malcolm, he so reminds me of Mr. Talbot, but he is a big handsome man, not anything like Mr. Talbot in appearance. But Moneybag is quite different, Malcolm. As I told you before he is a perfect gentleman and a pure European and he would never do anything wrong. I like him for this, but I like him also because I know that he is in love with my friend Miss McGuire, and that she admires him in her own sweet way. The last time Moneybag and I went to the photographers together to see the proofs, it was a very rainy day and he had to take me in a carriage or we should have been washed away. He asked me if I thought Miss McGuire would ever marry; this is how he put it Malcolm. Miss Carpenter he said, do you think Miss McGuire intends to marry and if she does, don't you think she will want to make a big catch. I told him that he was making a great mistake if he thought Agnes was looking out for money or position. That Agnes always told me that she would never marry, but that I was perfectly

sure she would do so if she loved the person who wanted to marry her."

"And what did he say in reply, Gwendolyn?" Malcolm enquired.

"He said that there was no hope for a poor man like him, that if he did not admire her so much, he knew where to turn for consolation. Now Malcolm I have told you all. You are not angry. You are not jealous, are you?"

"My precious one," he replied, "I don't think I shall ever be angry with you. You are so straight-forward, so simple, so confiding and so unsuspecting that I wonder how you can be a grown up woman. No, I am sure I can never be cross or angry with you; but about jealousy, that is a different question. In this as in all important subjects darling we will do well to exchange our views. I hope that in most matters we will be found to be in substantial, if not in entire, agreement. But even if we are not agreed, there is really no need to be despondent. As we love one another we will always respect one another's views, won't we darling? We can agree to differ."

"Of course Malcolm, and let me tell you first that I shall never be jealous of you. If I find young ladies talking to you and admiring you I shall feel proud because it shows that you are attractive and it pays a compliment to my taste."

"So far you are quite right Gwen. But what would you say if I was always talking to youngladies and frequently sought the company of one or two of them."

"I don't think I would ever say anything Malcolm. You see I trust you so that I could not possibly think you will not be true to me."

"My dear girl you are wrong here. Of course you need have no fear. The views I hold, and which I shall presently explain to you, and my love for you, will prevent such a catastrophe. Although I never went about much myself, I firmly believe that in the company of young ladies a man is refined and is assisted to look at life in a proper and unselfish way. Thousands of young men would escape the dangers that at present overtake them, if they would spend their evenings in visiting the houses of friends where there are young ladies, instead of frequenting clubs and public restaurants, or attending public balls and smoking concerts. Wait, I see what you are thinking of. You are afraid that many of them avoid the former, for fear of falling in love too early. I agree with you in thinking that that's a drawback, but the man must not make it a point of going too frequently to the same house. If his objective is to avoid marrying early, he will, if he has sufficient determination of character, quite easily keep away from falling in love, if he refrains from seeing the same young ladies too often. But

even supposing he falls in love because he can't help it, just like we have, and gets married early in life, I still think he will do better than if he wasted the best part of his life in riotous living."

"Will you forgive me for interrupting, Malcolm?"

"Most certainly dear."

"A few months back I attended a public lecture. The speaker, I forget his name, impressed upon his audience that he spoke primarily in the interests of the Eurasians and Anglo Indians. Among other things, he said that the Eurasians stunted their mental and material developement by early marriage. I cannot remember all he said Malcolm, but he spoke very forcibly and gave numerous examples to prove the correctness of his statement. I think most of the audience went away thoroughly convinced that he was right. I wish he had given this lecture years ago and that you heard it Malcolm."

"I dare say he was right darling, but one has also to consider these questions from the moral as well as the mental and material standpoints. Of course, the basic principle of all such theories is the attainment of the greatest good for the greatest number. Looking at the matter only from the stand point of happiness, no theory will affect two men alike. Many a man who has made up his mind not to marry early, and therefore delays in proposing to the



only woman who is likely to make him happy, like Mr. Moneybag, loses his chance of happiness for ever, and later on he marries one who is quite unsuited to him. While another man who believes in the benefits of early marriage and loses no time in getting married to one whom he falls in love with at first sight, like myself, very soon regrets his hasty step. If only we could see into the future how different our lives would be. If I were told, when I was a bachelor, that you would be what you are, I would most certainly have waited for you, and what a life of happiness would have been in store for us. But now, what is it now? But to return to the question of jealousy, I believe in proper jealousy as distinct from unreasonable jealousy. There can be no real true love without proper jealousy. I am sure that this is or will be your view also, only no occasion has occurred to make you experience the feeling and analyse your thoughts. Indeed, darling, I shall always endeavour to guide my actions to spare you such feelings but in a matter like this one cannot always help one's self. This is more especially true in the case of women. Men seek. Women are sought after. Now let me illustrate my meaning by applying my views to the cases you refer to. First to take up Mr. Baren's case. Now his attentions to you were quite undesirable, and from his remarks I agree with Miss McGuire that he is a prig, but you could not possibly have been rude to him

on the first occasion he caught you up in the car, but when he became officious and passed unkind remarks and called you by your Christian name, a thing he had no right to do, you did well to tell him off. It is impossible I can be jealous of him. Pooh! he is not worth consideration. Next is Mr. Joseph's case. It seems to me dear that his attentions take a more serious form. The man is falling or has already fallen in love with you. As you have no wish to reciprocate his love you should, I think, effectively show him that, as you cannot love him, you cannot encourage him. If you answered him, not rudely, but a trifle indifferently or for the matter of that absent-mindedly on the next two or three occasions when he refers to you, he will understand that he is not wanted. The case of Mr. Moneybag stands on quite a distinct and different footing. He is really in love with your friend Miss McGuire. He likes you. May I say he likes you very much by reason of the fact that you are Miss McGuire's best friend, and because his eyes have recently been opened to the fact that you are a beautiful woman. But he is one of those men who, too timid to propose to the person he loves, will end up by marrying some one else who takes advantage of his weakness. Now as sure as I am that you love me, so sure I am that Miss McGuire is eating her heart out for him, and as a result she'll probably live and die an old maid. This accounts for her

telling you so often that she'll never marry. By the way, may I ask if you have told her all the conversation that has passed between you and Mr. Moneybag, especially the part about her expecting to make a good match?"

"No, Malcolm."

"That's just it. I think you should."

"But if she says something in reply am I in turn to convey it to Mr. Moneybag? I am afraid Malcolm it might end in my having to play gooseberry, a role I don't at all appreciate. I am so inexperienced Malcolm in love affairs."

"Yes, darling. that is a point I did not consider, but any how, as I was saying Mr. Moneybag's case is quite different, and I think you were wrong, girlie, in going to his office room for a drink, simply because you did not like to hurt his feelings. If you went there because you really needed the drink it did not matter. Don't go into his room again, sweetheart, when you happen to visit the shop alone, especially after the remark he made to you in the carriage, and always take a good drink before you go."

"What remark Malcolm?"

"The remark about knowing where to find consolation."

"Malcolm dear, surely you are not suggesting that he referred to me."

“Suggesting? There is no question of suggesting. You are a cuckoo. It was a bait thrown out directly for you, and what he has understood by your apparent blindness, which he must have regarded as affected, I hesitate to think. In these circumstances you will no doubt understand that I am a bit jealous of him. If I had any right to control your actions, (you understand what I mean), I should ask you not to see too much of him, but in view of our peculiar relationship and to show you that I mean every word I say, when I tell you that you are and must regard yourself as a free woman, I must bottle my jealousy. Don’t you for a moment misunderstand me darling, I do not suggest in the least that you have wavered one inch in your love and faithfulness to me.”

“Malcolm, dear, after what you have just said, how ever am I going to face Mr. Moneybag again, and yet I have to, Malcolm. What will Agnes think if I refuse to go with her when next she asks me? Must I write and send him the money for the photos? He will feel hurt. Oh I beg your pardon, Malcolm. Malcolm don’t be angry but believe me he is a perfect gentleman. I have very few gentlemen friends Malcolm, I can count them on the fingers of one hand. I have looked upon Mr. Moneybag only as a good friend. Mr. Baren and Mr. Joseph are nothing to me. I shall choke them off if they molest me just as I did Mr. Talbot.”

"My dear girl, don't ever think that I would require you, even if you were my wife, to give up your friends whether men or ladies. Consider all that I have told you as an abstract discussion on the question of jealousy. Your only defect is your superlative quality of innocence, that is to say you have the defect of your qualities. I would rather you knew more of the world and its ways, and yet I wonder if I would love you as much if you did. No, darling, I have made too many mistakes in life to be dogmatic. Continue to move as your own conscience guides you."

"Malcolm, tell me again that you are not angry with me for being so foolish. No Malcolm, don't speak, that's not enough. It's gone so dark, Malcolm, let us stand up, and take me into your arms, Malcolm."

"Yes dear, and I shall press you as only I can."

He held her for fully five minutes. They made a fine pair those two lovers. Both tall and stately, they seemed to be a perfect match. When he released her he took out his watch. "My word it is already seven o'clock; whatever will your mother say. We cannot go home in the tram car. Let us hurry, dear, I must hail a taxi."

"Malcolm it is now my turn to tell you that you are very innocent. You know very little of Bombay. We are now at least twenty minutes' walk from a taxi stand. But come

with me, Malcolm, I know a place near by where a carriage can be obtained, and don't be alarmed about mother being anxious or annoyed, I have a scheme in view which I shall tell you in the gharry."

It was with considerable difficulty that they secured a carriage. As they entered it Gwendolyn ordered the coachman to drive to Colaba Causeway.

"My dear girl, said Malcolm. This is too bad, we are already late, what ever will your mother say. I would risk anything except being caught or suspected by her of making love to you, especially after the confidence she, the other day, stated she had in me."

"How impatient you are Malcolm; I wonder who are more impatient, men or women. This is my scheme (Oh how wicked I feel) to get us out of trouble with mother. Miss McGuire lives in Colaba Causeway. Mother has been asking me many times to bring her over for dinner, so I am going to carry her away with us now. We won't say anything about being late and when Ma sees her with us she won't say anything either. Not that I fear that Ma will be annoyed with us, she likes you too much Malcolm. But I forgot to tell you, I went to a birthday party some-time ago and, truly Malcolm, I got unavoidable delayed. I went home about nine. Mr. Moneybag insisted on dropping me although I repeatedly assured him that I would get

home alright. Mother was very angry, Malcolm, because I stayed out so late and it hurt me when she spoke angrily to me in the presence of Mr. Moneybag. I am afraid I was a bit rebellious, Malcolm, but Mr. Moneybag seemed to understand and just disappeared quietly as if he had not come with me. He is a perfect gentleman Malcolm."

"I certainly think you did right in not going home alone at nine in the night, darling."

"How kind of you to say so Malcolm. It shows how much you care for me."

Malcolm was in earnest in what he said, only he wished it had not been Mr. Moneybag.

Gwendolyn omitted to tell Malcolm that the house where the party was held was only three doors away from theirs and unfortunately Malcolm found this out a day or two later.

As they drove on Gwendolyn turned the conversation. "Malcolm," she said, "will you do me a favour?"

"Certainly my girl."

"What a hurry you are in to promise, Malcolm. Supposing I asked you to give me the moon or the sun."

He only laughed.

"Will you please watch Miss McGuire very carefully and tell me what you think of her?"

"Impossible darling. You don't suspect Miss McGuire of any crime do you, that you ask me to act the detective, and besides it would be so rude for me to do as you suggest. What will she think of me if every time she turns in my direction she finds me watching her? But what is it you want to know? Let me see, your friend Miss McGuire is a charming young girl, short, slim and pretty. She has a determined character a set chin, and a transparently innocent face, but she is always unselfish and obliging and scarcely ever speaks harshly or rudely. I mean she has a gentle, soft voice and a cool temper. In fact she is a beautiful creature," he stopped and then added as if in an afterthought, "but not half as beautiful as you, darling."

"Oh, Malcolm how do you know all this? I almost feel afraid of you. Have you been making enquiries about her, Malcolm? Oh how silly I am, Mother must have told you."

"Your mother has never mentioned her name to me, dear. I have learnt all this from you. You speak of her almost every hour."

"But surely Malcolm I didn't tell you that she was short."

"Well you told me that just now, didn't you, when you spoke of carrying her away. By the way Gwen, do you think you will be able to persuade your mother to permit us to go to the Bioscope to-night, we can keep on the carriage dear, and your mother is not likely to



object if Miss McGuire will go with us. But don't ask Miss McGuire before your mother agrees."

They stopped at No. 45, Colaba Causeway. Gwen went in and in her own words carried Miss McGuire back with her, after which they drove home direct. It was evident that Mrs. Carpenter was a trifle anxious but when she saw Miss McGuire she exclaimed. "I knew there must have been a good reason for the delay. Malcolm is always so considerate."

Gwendolyn looked at Malcolm and smilingly winked at him.

"Mrs. Carpenter," said Malcolm, "I so wished to take Gwendolyn to the Pictures, but as I knew you would not go, and as I didn't like to ask you to let her go alone with me, I abstained from asking you. Will you permit her to go to-night if Miss McGuire will favour us by making the third?"

"Many thanks, Mr. Wensley, I shall be delighted to go, but you must take me home first. I never go out without my sister's permission. She will not object to my going anywhere with Gwendolyn, and we all seem to know you so well already. Gwendolyn is always talking about you."

Dinner was in consequence a hurried meal. When they drove back to Miss McGuire's, Malcolm entered the house with the ladies and was introduced to Miss McGuire's four sisters,

all her seniors. When he asked permission to take Miss Agnes with them to the Bioscope, Miss McGuire said. "Really, Mr. Wensley, I have no objection but Agnes has no doubt forgotten that to-day is the anniversary of her uncle's birthday and all of us promised to go to his place after dinner. He is old and a bit exacting and I don't think he'll easily forgive Agnes if she absents herself, but it is entirely for her to decide."

Miss Agnes looked first at Malcolm, and then at Gwendolyn, "Will you forgive me Mr. Wensley, and you too Gwendolyn for my thoughtlessness? I do so like to go with you but uncle is sure to write to father and father will not be pleased and you know Gwendolyn how careful I am never to displease father."

"Please don't apologise Miss McGuire, we quite realise that it was only your eagerness to please us that led you to forget your other engagement. Come Gwendolyn let us be going home."

"Oh Mr. Wensley, don't do that, don't spoil your evening on my account. Gwendolyn will never forgive me if you do. If you are going back I'd rather accompany you and risk displeasing father, but really Mr. Wensley there is nothing wrong in your taking Gwendolyn out, you are such old friends."

"It's not that Miss McGuire, but you will no doubt recall what I told Mrs. Carpenter."

"Oh that is all right, leave that to me. You both go to the Bioscope and I'll make an early opportunity of explaining the case to Mrs. Carpenter and my sister will do so also when she next sees Mrs. Carpenter."

"Yes, Malcolm," said Gwendolyn, "we'll go. When we return I'll simply tell Ma that Agnes has something to explain to her and that she will do so when she next calls over. Mother will then understand that we did not wish to keep anything from her."

They bid the others good night and walked down the street to the carriage. As they did so Miss Agnes turned to her eldest sister and said, "Watch them dear, what a splendid pair they would have made. What a pity he didn't marry Gwendolyn instead of Martha Ley."

"You must not pass such remarks," said her sister.

In the carriage Gwendolyn laid hold of Malcolm's hands and looking up to him said, "Malcolm, when Agnes went in with me to take her hat off, what do you think she told me?"

"I am not quick at guessing dear."

"She said Oh Gwendolyn what a nice man your friend Mr. Wensley is. How lucky you are that he is so fond of you. I wish I could see more of him. One feels different in the presence of such men."

"Bravo Gwendolyn," he replied, "you do know how to embellish reports. You should join the staff of some newspaper. What would you like to represent? The Times or The Mail? Oh forgive me dear I forgot you are a lady."

"Malcolm you are a scamp, don't look at me, I'm blushing."

He bought tickets for a box seat. The pictures were certainly attractive and interesting, but he found time now and again to bend forward and kiss Gwen's hand, and to place his arm pressingly round her waist.

At the interval he took her out into the open and they sat at one of the refreshment tables. Malcolm ordered ices for them. They had hardly exchanged a word when a gentleman, handsome and well groomed, walked up to Gwendolyn and stretched his hand out to her.

"How'd you do; Miss Carpenter?"

Gwendolyn stood up and placed her hand in his. "I am delighted to see you Mr. Moneybag." She forgot for the moment that she was turning her back on Malcolm.

"You must really forgive me Miss Carpenter for not accompanying you the other night when you left Miss McGuire's. I know I promised to. In fact you know I always do it. It is a great pleasure to me, but that day I was so engrossed in hearing what Miss Agnes was saying that I didn't see you leaving. You

must forgive me and to show me that you do, you must permit me to take you to the theatre to-morrow or the day after. What do you say?"

Gwendolyn did not really know what to say. That day was the first day she had been out alone at night with a gentleman and she knew that her mother would not consent to her going out. And yet because she wished to be courteous she thought it best to reply. "I shall be delighted Mr. Moneybag, but I must ask my mother."

Quite unintentionally Malcolm cleared his throat. Gwendolyn turned round instantaneously.

"Oh Malcolm let me introduce you."

"Mr. Moneybag, Mr. Wensley."

Moneybag gave Malcolm a patronising bow which Malcolm returned stiffly. Then for a few seconds the two men looked at one another straight in the face, after which Moneybag wheeled in the direction of Gwendolyn who had drawn herself away to a side and said, "It's about time I got back. Don't forget to write to me in the morning."

Gwendolyn came up to Malcolm and pinched him on the arm. "Why are you so quiet you silly boy? Come take me back."

"Gwendolyn," Malcolm enquired, "how often a week does Mr. Moneybag go home with

you from Miss McGuire's and is it before or after dinner?"

"Don't be silly Malcolm. Did you for a moment think I was going to the theatre alone with Mr. Moneybag? I'll write as soon as we return home and tell him that Mother won't permit me to go out alone with any young man and I'll ask Miss McGuire to explain the circumstances in which I went out with you to-night."

Malcolm felt very happy and he forgot that his question had not been answered. And when he did not press for an answer, Gwendolyn felt she could breathe a bit more freely, because after Malcolm had told her he was jealous of Mr. Moneybag, she didn't like to tell him, although she had made up her mind before he came to Bombay that she would, that regularly twice a week Mr. Moneybag accompanied her from Miss McGuire's place to the Tram terminus, a fifteen minutes walk along a dark road.

The second last picture on the programme was a dramatic piece of exceptional merit, Malcolm became quite engrossed in it. He released Gwendolyn's hand and waist and bending forward against the railing concentrated his attention upon the screen.

The film pictured a tragedy. The plot was quite simple. It was the case of a young woman poisoning the wife of the man she loved.

When the lights came on Malcolm leaned back and looked at Gwendolyn. She was as white as a sheet. "Malcolm," she pleaded, "this place is frightfully hot and suffocating. I am so sorry we didn't go home after dropping Miss McGuire. Take me out into the open air Malcolm."

She leaned heavily on his arm. He placed her in the carriage and when he himself entered she threw her head back on his chest. "Malcolm," she implored, "as we have come away before the end tell the man to drive slowly, I want to be with you."

He called out the necessary instructions to the coachman.

Gwendolyn looked up at him with pitiful entreaty in her eyes, "Malcolm dear; Malcolm dear, you don't think me like that woman, do you?"

"No sweetheart," he stammered. "However can I."

"Oh Malcolm it was not the pictures or the plot that made me feel like this, it was the expression I saw on your face as the spirit of the dead wife bent forward from the photograph that made me shudder within me. Malcolm, promise me this, you must promise me, that you will never hate Martha, that you will never be unkind to her or injure her because we love one another. Oh Malcolm you have been kind to her in the past, be ten times more kind

in the future. Promise me this Malcolm. Remember Malcolm that we have been like sisters."

"My poor child. It pains me to see you suffer like this. I have loved Martha and shall always love her. I hoped all these years that she would be more to me but I don't hope for that now since I have found you. That is the only difference, but I shall never cease to love her and I promise, for your sake, to bear with her a hundred times more and more than ever before. So cheer up darling, we have nothing to be afraid or ashamed of."

"Malcolm, how good you are to me. You are a perfect jewel. I shall love you here and in eternity. And Malcolm I am feeling very tired, let me go to sleep nestling in your arms."

He supported her head with his right hand and placed his left hand gently round her waist and she threw herself back and went into a calm sleep. As she lay thus in his arms he kissed her hair, her lips and her brow. But his actions were so gentle that she was not disturbed.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### On Probation.

Three days later Malcolm left Bombay. Gwendolyn and her mother and a few other of Malcolm's relatives went to the station to see him off. Gwendolyn was very sorrowful. Off and on she turned her back on the others or went into the compartment on some excuse but in reality to wipe away uncontrollable tears. Punctual to time the train steamed out. She ran alongside his compartment up to the end of the platform and then flew a kiss to him. "Do take care of yourself, darling," she called out.

"God bless you my little girl," was all he said in reply.

Malcolm was travelling in the second class. The opposite berth to his was occupied by a gentleman whose trunks were labelled, "Waterloo." Mr. Waterloo did not enter the compartment at Bombay having proceeded to the Dining Car. Malcolm put out his bed but he was unable to go to sleep as he expected to see a relative of his at Kalyan. When the train arrived at Kalyan he got out of his compartment and his cousin meeting him they entered into conversation. The train had not stopped for a minute when the guard brought a lady who was followed by an ayah carrying

a child, and told them to enter the compartment. The lady seemed to be on friendly terms with the guard, from which Malcolm inferred that she was the wife of a railway employe and probably held only a Third or Intermediate class pass. On entering the compartment she proceeded to place her belongings on the berth which had been reserved for Mr. Waterloo. She had hardly completed doing so when he came up to the compartment. Pointing a finger to Malcolm in a disdainful manner and raising his voice, he shouted : " Look here I dont know whether you know that that berth has been reserved for me ever since this train left Bombay."

" I am quite sure the matter does not concern me in the least," Malcolm replied.

" Bally ass," he muttered and entered the compartment.

Malcolm wished to spare his cousin any unpleasantness ; so he bade her good-bye and entered the compartment also.

Waterloo immediately addressed him. " It is bad enough having to travel with the likes of you," he said, " but when you bring your wife in and a sickly child and a damned black servant, it's all bally rot." and he continued to utter the filthiest abuse Malcolm ever heard a man use in the presence of a lady.

" I must protest Sir," Malcolm said, " to such behaviour on your part. It is disgraceful that you should use such language at all, and when

you use it in the presence of a lady it is intolerable. If you dare to continue I shall teach you the severest lesson you have learnt in your life. Have you ever been pitched through a carriage window?" and turning to the lady he said, "Will you please be seated, Madam?"

"Thank you," she replied. "I did not want to come in here but the guard forced me to. I told him I would rather go into the third class but he said there was no room even in the third class. I am sorry for what has happened, Sir; I am only going to the next station."

Waterloo got out and literally yelled for the guard. Malcolm then noticed that he was anything but sober. When the guard turned up, Waterloo shouted at him, "Remove this woman and that black female at once or you'll get into trouble."

The guard took off his helmet and placed it under his arm.

"I am sorry, Sir; I put them in only because they are going to the next station and I saw you in the dining car."

"Look here guard," Malcolm interrupted, "with the exception of putting this servant into this compartment I don't see how you are to blame if there was room nowhere else."

Waterloo's angry voice broke in again: "You haven't done yourself any good, guard, I know the General Traffic Manager of this Railway very well. He belongs to my club.

I'll bring your conduct to his notice. He will bally well sack you on the spot."

Malcolm smiled. It was so absurd for a man who was travelling second class to say he belonged to the same club as the General Traffic Manager of a big Railway.

"Sir," said the Guard, "please forgive me ; I am a married man with six children and, and, a mother and a widowed sister to support."

"Don't be a disgrace to your community," Malcolm interrupted. "Go and start the train."

The train started. Waterloo threw himself on his berth and grumbled in an undertone. At the next station the lady, the servant and child got out. Malcolm then turned to Waterloo and said: "I think you have to thank your stars that I have a cool temper and an injured hand otherwise I should have thrashed you when you used such abominable language in the presence of that lady. Only a low cad could have behaved as you did."

Waterloo made no answer but grunted like a pig. Shortly afterwards he moved into another compartment.

The day after Malcolm arrived in Calcutta, he received the following letter from Gwendolyn:—it was addressed to his shop.

My very own darling sweetheart,  
I feel I cannot go to sleep to-night without writing to you. Oh my

own sweet and dearest boy how I miss you. My life, believe me darling, seems a mere blank; But darling I must not let these wretched feelings get the better of me. I know your lot is a thousand times harder to bear than mine and if I can't be brave and do a good fight, then I won't be proving true to my promise. Oh, darling, it was a hard promise I gave you that I would not fret but, like every promise, it is going to cost me something to stand up to it. *But sweetheart if there is one thing I shall never do it is to break a promise I have made to you.* Anything but that. In this matter you can depend on me, darling, and I know you will love me all the more for it. I shall always pray that I always live up to and act according to your high ideals of me; please, you dearest, pray also.

I hope Mother and Helen and Mark did not think I was absurd for running along the platform. If only they realised what it meant for me, and to hear you say the words, *God bless you my little girl*, as I came near the compartment and flew a kiss to you was just like killing me. I felt like running after the train and jumping in and saying, Oh darling, don't ask me ever to leave you again. I simply can't. What a different look your face had the days we went out to the beach together. Then you looked so happy and to-day, oh so sad. Of course you were brave, exceptionally so. It must have cost you a great deal and yet you bore up so well. That is why you had

a return of those pains. You were stifling your emotions. I wish to God you could have given vent to them by giving me a tight hug and saying, good-night sweetheart.

I feel I cannot go to sleep to night: I am sure I'll talk of you in my sleep and call you many endearing names.

Darling I did not ever dream what love could be until I loved you. Oh believe me dearest I just adore you. I love you absorbingly and passionately; every pulse in my body beats for you and you alone.

How can I ever tell you what this month has been to me. It has been so brimful of happiness that I can only long for them again. But as I have often told you I can never be selfish: I must learn to be more and more unselfish.

Oh I don't know what I shall do to-morrow morning when I get up to see no sweet welcome face and also when I come home in the evening to miss you at your accustomed place near the door waiting for me, to wisper to me. *Dress quickly sweetheart so that we can get out as early as possible and enjoy our talk.* Malcolm you can't imagine how miserable I shall feel for days. You are all the world to me, believe me sweetheart.

How can I thank you enough for all your kindness to me. Of course you will say they are the fruits of your deep and true love.

Yes, believe me I feel they are so. As true love leads to doing acts and also to implicit confidence.

Malcolm in all our troubles and when our circumstances changed after father's death and we were poor, you are the only human being who never changed towards us and do you wonder Malcolm why I love you as I do.

I do hope dearest you had a nice journey and that your companion was agreeable. Didn't you wish it was me?

I can picture you saying as you read this letter. "My poor child, how she does love me and I know she'll fret for me."

Darling, I shall always be yours and yours only. My first and last sweetheart: the only man who has kissed my lips and who ever shall.

I feel that I can never love you more. You have the full love any woman can give to a man, but you become a thousands times dearer or rather more valuable to me every time I think of you and of all the good there is in you.

Darling I have had friends. Good and excellent ones too, but alas to my sorrow I know what it is to have the friendship which is of a far different nature and character. I mean the sweet friendship of a sweetheart and lover.

Sweetheart I know you will have troubles. I know that you will bear them bravely and manfully as you have done in the past but my

love why can't you take them to God—Pray that God will help you out of them.—

“Don't stop praying when bound with grief,

“Don't stop praying you'll get relief ;

“Troubles never escape God's sight,

“Don't stop praying, He'll make it right.”

Darling I always laughed at people and said, how can you write long letters and use absurd names like, pet etc. and yet here I am myself doing it. I would have boxed any one's ears who a year ago would have told me that I would, and yet now that I have found you my love, my precious one, I cannot see how it can be otherwise than this. I love you dearie ; hence I must call you sweet names.

Darling, I want to tell you something but I am actually blushing. Don't think me silly sweetheart. When we returned from the station, Mother went in to get the dinner ready and I sat out in the verandah on the easy chair. I was feeling so lonely that I closed my eyes and began to think of you ; and what do you think I imagined. We, you and I, had a dear little house with a dear little baby garden, well laid out, in Hastings, with a dear ducky little drawing and dining room and a sweet dainty dressing room and shall I say it, darling, a cosy and snug bed room, and I was just full with delight and unspeakable joy when alas ! I thought how foolish I was. I jumped up and could not



help crying. I had to go and wash my face before facing Mother.

You often speak of worshipping me and ask me to accept your worship. How can I ever find words to express to you how I feel about it.

I wish to make a confession to you sweetheart: Do you know that it is not you who loved me first but I who loved you from the first day when we had tea together. Do you remember it darling? but of course I would have gone on loving you silently if you had not spoken. You don't know, darling, how much I love you and admire you for that clever letter you wrote and gave me when I returned from Darjeeling. Only a man like you could have thought of such a way of expressing himself. I must confess that up to recently I have had doubts and misgivings as to whether I behaved correctly. Often I have thought that I only surrendered myself to you because I was weak and that although I loved you I should have crushed my love for you and have pretended indignant at your letter but since this month all my doubts have been dispelled.

I can go on writing the whole night darling, but I must stop my precious one. Mother may get up and want to know why I am so late; and I don't like to tell her an untruth. This month has only made me realize what you are really to me. Do take care of yourself and be cheerful.

Tata my very own sweet boy.

With tons of fond love and kisses from ever  
your own girlie.

Gwendolyn.

One year succeeded another. Gwendolyn invariably spent both her Midsummer and Christmas holidays with Martha. Her passionate liking for Calcutta was the excuse. Only on one occasion was she unable to go to Calcutta and this was due to having to play at a Christmas charity concert at Bombay. She had excused herself from taking part but the sudden illness of the lady who had undertaken to play the accompaniments, the urgent persuasions of her friends, Miss McGuire and Mr. Moneybag and her unselfish nature resulted in her deciding to forego her holiday. Malcolm was very disappointed. He realised however that it must have cost her as much or more to remain behind. He admired her for her unselfishness only he wished that Mr. Moneybag had not been one of those who persuaded her to remain back. All through the years when the lovers were not in the same place they wrote to one another almost without exception daily. It was part of the routine of Malcolm's daily life to receive a letter from Gwendolyn and to reply to it the same day. He never left the shop without doing so. It was only on Sundays or holidays that he occasionally missed writing to her as it was not always possible for him to do so without running the risk of being questioned or suspected by Martha.

One of his friends in the firm by the name of Hathaway, who undoubtedly was convinced that Malcolm was in daily correspondence with a lady, made it a practice to tease him frightfully. He would come to Malcolm every day and say "Well Wensley has your girl written to you?" One day he sat opposite Malcolm and after making the usual remark added, "if I was a member of the Legislative Council I would introduce a bill under which all letters intended for a married man should be sent under cover to his wife's address and all those intended for a married woman under cover addressed to the husband."

"My dear fellow," Malcolm retorted, "what about Post Box No. and what about the wicked bachelor like yourself for instance or the shy but scheming maid?"

"Oh," Hathaway replied, "that's all right, bachelors and maids are entitled to all the fun in the world and are free to practice deception and flirtation to their heart's content, but not married persons. By the way, Wensley, I have been wishing to speak to you for some time. It is because we are close friends and I have your true interests at heart. I might be quite wrong of course but I feel that I am not. But after I have spoken I quite admit you are entitled to snub me and tell me to mind my own business but I am willing to run that risk. I am willing even to run the risk of losing your friendship, but I cannot remain your friend and keep back saying what I ought to say when my duty to

you as a friend tells me I ought to speak. You see I am about to open fire even without asking your permission."

"My dear Hathaway please say all you have to. You will not offend me in the least but you must not expect too much from me."

"Well, Wensley, I have often been in your room just as we got into the shop. The first thing you do is to look for and open a letter addressed in a lady's hand. The handwriting is quite familiar to all of us. If there is no letter for you, you send your peon to enquire if the Mail from Bombay has arrived and you give him instructions to remain on the whole day if necessary and bring back your letter and you tell him distinctly not to bring it to your house but to some one else's in case you have left office. But that is not all. You are a fellow of a very calm and equable temperament, but it is common talk in the office, on any day when you are a bit difficult to please or show any impatience, that the Bombay Mail (one clever youngster had the cheek the other day to suggest female) has not arrived. But as I implied it is your own business and nobody else's, except of course your wife's, whom you write to and who writes to you. Now if I ask you a question, of course it is an impertinent one, will you give me an answer?"

"I cannot promise you," Malcolm replied, "but don't be afraid, fire off."

"Does your wife know that you receive a letter daily from a lady?"

"No," Malcolm answered.

"Just as I thought," Hathaway remarked. "How could it be otherwise. Nobody but lovers write to one another daily, and then only those who are desperately in love with one another. Wensley, I have seen many cases like yours. It is so very easy to enter into these entanglements. Yes, man, there is no other word for it unless one uses bad names, but my word it is frightfully difficult to get out of them. A month of Sundays is not enough. Sooner or later either the lady or the man will get tired of the arrangement. Mere letter-writing never satisfies. Such women are usually only out for all that they can get out of a fellow and, of course although he will never admit it, the man is out for all he can get out of the woman, and nothing more. I admit these women are charming. Generally very much more agreeable than one's wife and certainly much more yielding and vivacious, but what of the cost? Do you keep a separate cash account of the expenses you incur directly or indirectly by reason of such an attachment? If you don't, you should. Wensley. You kick up a devil of a row with the office if separate accounts are not maintained for the different commodities we deal in. Why don't you practice what you preach?"

Malcolm for the first time realised that the

arrangement was certainly a very expensive one. Not a week passed without his sending Gwendolyn a present; a watch, a ring, a fountain pen, a pair of gold earrings, a tiger claw brooch, a bicycle, and countless other little things were among the presents he had already given her and he was paying for the hire of her piano. Some of them he gave her frankly for her birthday, most of the others were won by her at imaginary raffles concerning which he had written to Mrs. Carpenter or got Martha to write about and Gwendolyn always bought a ticket. No one, not even Gwendolyn knew the costliness of these presents. The pair of earrings he had paid two hundred rupees for, but it was not supposed to be worth more than five. Gwendolyn believed he had drawn them at the one rupee Christmas lucky dips at the Zoological Gardens for which Malcolm bought tickets for her.

And again what a lot he spent in train fares in her journeys to and fro. Besides whenever they went out together he would never hear of her returning home without visiting a confectioner's for ices.

"It is a small matter," continued Hathaway, "but I am sure you would grudge spending an anna a day in postage on your wife if she was away from you. Even if you wrote to her daily the half anna stamp would be quite sufficient for the letter. And yet your letters

to this charming creature, forgive me Wensley but I almost feel inclined to omit the adjective, are invariably registered ones. Wensley, as I said before, mere letter writing does not satisfy one party, or the other. There is a desire for closer relationship. But my word if this stage is reached the beginning of the end is in sight and as sure as night follows day, misery, unhappiness and, more often than not, murder follow in quick train. Don't tell me Wensley that you have not read and heard of case after case of this description. Your doctrine, and you have expounded it to me and other fellows very often, is *whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap*. Don't think I am trying to preach, oh no, I am not given that way, but we practical or worldly youngsters believe in cause and effect. Now, tell me Wensley, if the case in point was not your own, and you were asked to express an opinion on it, or give advice as to how one or other of the principal parties should behave in future, what would you say?"

"My dear Hathaway you have, after considerable straying, struck the right note. Candidly I would tell you that two or three years ago I would have unreservedly and vehemently condemned such a relationship with all the force of argument at my command, and surely I would have predicted all the misery and unhappiness which you refer to, but now I honestly look at the question quite differently and like to deal with it practically and

impartially. I would like to ascertain several facts which must have or have had a direct bearing and influence on the conduct of all the parties concerned, and I would like further to be quite accurately informed of the character and disposition of the principal parties. More than this also, but such is unattainable, I would like to understand the minds of the lovers. What is their ultimate object? What is their object when the third or shall we say the injured wife or husband remains alive? What are their feelings towards the third party? Indeed without a true statement on the last head, I would ask to be excused from pronouncing any definite opinion or, for the matter of that, from giving any opinion at all."

"You have very cleverly presented your defence Wensley, but with all this information before me I cannot feel that it makes an iota of difference. Now to speak again impersonally, I am convinced that whether the principal parties be true lovers, or pleasure seeking sensual people, grave danger is always present and the danger is all the more marked in the former case. In many instances where the woman is a cheap creature, the liaison can be terminated by a large compensation payment, but where the lady is an innocent girl there can never be an end to the arrangement without plunging her into a life of misery and despair. In every such instance the desire to get rid of the third person must be present. To accomplish this



end, some go to the length of murder. You must have read of the sensational case where a married man having fallen in love with a married woman the injured wife and deceived husband of the villains were removed one after the other in the space of a month. But all have not got it in them to attempt murder, or even if they have it in them, they refrain because they are afraid of the axiom, *Murder will out*. But yet there is murder in their hearts. I swear to you there must be, because they must at all times wish the barrier to be removed so that their ultimate object can be attained. It is only a question of time. And their ultimate object is closer relationship. You cannot deny it Wensley. It is no excuse for them to argue within themselves that the matter rests in higher hands and that they will do nothing but take their chances of the third person dying first. Besides although this may be their feelings in the beginning it will not always remain so. If you neglect your wife and you are sure to neglect her if you carry on with another, she is bound to die of a broken heart; and it is an accepted theory that more than twentyfive per cent of husbands and wives die of broken hearts. Do you mean to tell me Wensley that killing a person of a broken heart is not murder? Remember please, I am speaking impersonally. But think over the matter and of all I have said and answer the questions I have raised for yourself." And with this final shot he strode out of the room.

Hathaway was an exceedingly nice man, thoroughly straightforward and honest. He was, as he himself would tell you, a man of the world, with all the failings of a man of the world. He drank as much as he could stand, he never went home before two or three in the morning, and he got all he could out of life. But he was straight. He would never stoop to do a dirty trick and you can depend on his speaking the truth at all times quite regardless of the consequences. Malcolm liked him very much indeed and he felt sure Hathaway liked him in return. In any case he was perfectly sure that Hathaway had spoken to him not in a fault finding spirit but because he desired to do him a good turn.

It is not to be supposed that Malcolm was dead to reason on the subject of his clandestine relations with Gwendolyn. Indeed no. On the contrary Hathaway's remarks only roused what was already only semi-dormant in his mind. After he had considered the matter for a few minutes he had made up his mind that he would put the case fully and impartially before Gwendolyn and leave it to her to take a decision. He decided on this course because he recognised that it would be cruel and unmanly on his part to break with her. He had been mainly responsible for the present relations. It was all due to that letter he wrote at Monghyr ; and he had no right to propose to cast her aside after winning her love and especially

after going so far with her. But in her own interests it was incumbent on him to inform her of the dangers that beset her path. No sooner had he come to a decision than he walked over to Hathaway's room. He purposed telling him what he was going to do and thanking him for his advice, but Hathaway was not in. Malcolm returned to his room and by a curious coincidence found his brother Charles waiting for him. Time had improved Charles's position. He was now an Inspector of Police and was in good books with the Commissioner. His future was more or less assured.

"Hollo Malcolm," he said "I hope you are quite fit. I came to see you on a private matter. Can you spare me a few minutes?"

"Certainly Charles," he replied.

"I wish to get married Malcolm, and I would like to get married to Gwendolyn Carpenter. I am going to Bombay on a month's leave. I shall of course call on Gwendolyn and her mother, and I intend proposing to Gwendolyn. Now will you help me? Will you for instance write either to Gwendolyn or Mrs. Carpenter on my behalf? Just a sort of backing up. I have really grown to be very fond of Gwendolyn and the last time I met her at the Customs Officers' Ball I almost popped the question. It will be a great disappointment to me if she refuses me."

"I will do my best for you Charles," Malcolm replied. "Miss Carpenter has had several offers but she has refused them all. She says she does not intend to marry. I have some influence with her and it might prevail. I shall write to her to-night or to-morrow morning."

"Thank you Malcolm: Is there anything I can do for you in Bombay?"

"Yes, give my best regards to Mrs. Carpenter and Gwen."

"Sure there is nothing else?"

"No," he replied, "but I wish you luck."

The next morning Malcolm went into his study and wrote a letter to Gwen. As it was one he wished her to show her mother he accordingly wrote to her, as he sometimes did, as if she were only a good friend of his. He told her that Charles would soon be in Bombay and would propose to her. He strongly advised her to accept Charles. Indeed he pleaded that she would do so. He faced the question about the unsatisfactory reports against his character, and expressed the conviction that, if her mother cared to question Charles, he would no doubt completely satisfy her that there had really been nothing very wrong. He intended, when he reached office, to urge the question of their unsatisfactory relationship as he had decided the day before. When he had finished the letter, he put it under a cover and addressed it. As he turned to obtain a stamp

from the cabinet he noticed that Martha was looking over his shoulders.

"Who are you writing to Malcolm?"

"Look at the address," he replied.

"Give me that letter," she said, "I want to read it. I am sure you are telling some tales on me."

"Don't be silly Martha. I never tell tales. I don't think your name occurs in this letter. It's private; therefore I must ask you to excuse me from letting you read it."

"Private, did you say? What private business can you possibly have with Gwendolyn Carpenter which I should not know? I don't believe you Malcolm," and saying this she snatched the letter from his hand, tore open the envelope and began to read it.

"I beg of you, Martha, not to read that letter," he said. "It will do you no good."

She paid no heed to his remarks. When she had read the letter she said, "You deceitful fellow. You thought you'd get the better of me by writing to Gwendolyn. I'll soon show you who I am. As I told you before I'd rather see Gwendolyn dead than married to your wicked brother. I'd kill her on the day of the wedding if she agreed to marry him. Give me the two hundred rupees I came to you with, when I married you, and I will go at once to Bombay. Yes I will go to-night by the same train that villian is going

by and I'll tell him why I am going. My word he won't attempt to show himself near her place if he knows I'll be there."

"Don't behave so stupidly Martha. Give me back that letter; I promised to post it to-day."

"Which is impossible," she said as she tore it to pieces.

This annoyed Malcolm very much but he controlled himself, and after a little consideration he laughed heartily.

"What are you laughing at, you brute?" she angrily demanded.

"You must be silly, Martha, if you think that by destroying that letter, you have destroyed all chances of my writing to Gwendolyn. I am sure I can afford a few minutes at the shop to-day to write another letter and your behaviour is only incensing me to make a stronger case for Charles."

"You will write in office, will you? I will see that you don't get the better of me. I'll go to Bombay to-night and when your letter comes I shall receive it from the postman and destroy it."

"Go away Martha, I can't bear such nonsense."

"Then bear something else," she retorted, and struck him on the face with the ruler. The blow was a severe one and raised a big bump.

"Martha," he said, "you have burnt your boats. The last occasion you slapped me I warned you most seriously that I would not forgive you if you attempted to do so again. You have now, without any excuse, or at any rate without adequate excuse, repeated the offence. I am done with you, done with you once and for all. Men like me bear insults and illtreatment patiently and uncomplainingly for years. I have borne with you all these years. But we are men, not angels, and when we turn it is a permanent turn. From to-day, except in the eyes of the world, I am no longer your husband. I shall never speak to you except to answer questions you put to me. No more pity, no more consideration. I will not answer impertinent questions and I shall treat you as you deserve. No more forbearance, only strict and impartial justice. I shall never notice your presence nor consult you in any matter. You spoke of going to Bombay to-night, please do so. It will be the best thing for you. You have been accustomed in the past to have your own way. You will never have it again unless it pleases my arrangements to permit it. You have been of a domineering nature and, fool that I was, in the belief that it would give you happiness I permitted you to fancy you were the head of the house. Hereafter you shall be kept in your place. I shall be the boss of the show. Do you hear that? And what is more, a very strict boss too, and I shall compel you to obey my orders as you promised

to do when you married me, or out you go. But, as I said before, as this change will be too much for you, the very best thing you can do, is to go away and live apart from me. I have no more need for you. Go anywhere you want, I don't care. I am willing to treat you liberally," (and here he thought of his promise to Gwendolyn), "for certain reasons of my own. I shall allow you two hundred rupees a month as maintenance. Few men would do so in similar circumstances. I have no desire to bind you. You may tell your friends and relatives whatever story you like concerning our separation, I will not contradict it. You may live whatever life you like, I will not question it. Practically you are dead to me from to-day. So go. You will never be happy if you stay. You may get some sort of happiness if you get among your own class. Almost, I feel inclined to wish that when I die you will marry a coarse drunken sot who will give you all you deserve and a little more."

"You want me to go, do you?" Said Martha. "I just shan't. I'll stay here and make your life a hell upon earth."

"Which it has been all these years," he said.

"Wait and see," she retorted, "I know what to do to bring you to your senses. I'll come to your office and disgrace you. I'll write to the Directors of your firm and tell them what tricks you are up to. I shall accuse you to



them of bribery and misappropriation of money. I'll make your brother's life a misery also. He stayed with us for a long time without paying any board. I'll report the matter to the Commissioner of Police and if he does not take any notice, I shall take out a summons against Charles. And how foolish I am not to think of it! I'll run you into debt more and more. I'll go everywhere and sign up. I'll soon bring you to your senses, you despicable cad. Boss of the show, eh! Don't try to frighten me. Not you or the likes of you will do that."

"It's just the other way about, Martha. You will not succeed in frightening me. You never have. Now I shall let you into a little secret. For years all your people and mine have definitely called me a coward, because I did not put my foot down every time you behaved in a fashion similar to your behaviour to-day. In characterising me as a coward they were quite wrong. I was never afraid of you or for the matter of that of anyone. From a child I never knew what fear was. Soon after I married you, I discovered that you were very different to what you seemed during our courtship. It is really surprising how well you ladies mask your true character during that period. But I was determined that I would put up with you, that I would never be rude to you, that I would give you your own way, that I would bear with you in all your weakness. I also resolved to spare you all troubles

and anxiety. I was determined to make your life a really happy one, and hoped, fool that I was, that you would appreciate my behaviour and gradually amend. You have alienated me from all my relatives and friends. I could have stood anything from you except being struck. You did it once, I forgave you. You did it a second time, I forgave you. On both these occasions, notwithstanding that I was most severely tried, I did not complain of your behaviour. You did it a third time, it was too much for me, but I would have been unjust if I then called you to account, but I warned you most solemnly, not only at the moment but some days after when you were in a quiet and good mood, that it would be fatal if you repeated the offence. You have disregarded the deliberate warning I gave you. There is nothing left but that you should take the consequences, but as I mentioned before, I am willing to treat you liberally for certain reasons of my own. Concerning your threats, Charles is an Inspector of Police and he will soon see that you don't play any pranks on him. If you come to my shop and behave as you threatened to, or take it into your head to write to my employers, I shall soon set matters right by giving it out that you are a screw loose. If I advertise this fact you will not be able to obtain credit. No Martha, you have had your day. If you behaved properly, or even if you were not too wilful and selfish, you would have been the happiest wife in

the world. The only conclusion I can come to is that you never loved me at all. You married me as you would have married anybody, the African Coon in the Circus for instance, because you thought it was fashionable to be a married woman, and probably your vanity tempted you to wish to see how you would look in a wedding dress. Hence immediately after the marriage you wished to consider yourself a free person and your hatred for me has directed your actions ever since."

"Malcolm," she said. "you wrong me and you know you do. How often have you not said that I was the victim of a bad temper. I love you Malcolm, I have always loved you, Without you life would be an impossibility for me. If you were to die to-morrow I shall cut my throat the same day. I cannot live without you. Forgive me Malcolm, I promise to be a better wife in future. I promise to obey you, to respect your wishes and never to do anything that will hurt you."

"Stop Martha," he said, "all this won't get me to change my decision. Remember it has taken many years for me to change. Do you think a moment's pleading will alter my views? You don't understand me in the least Martha. I have no faith in you or in your promises, so don't waste words."

He left the study and went into his bed room. He was terribly upset.

Martha ran into the room shortly afterwards: "Do you see this?" she said, showing him a bottle of Belladonna. "I am going to drink the contents of this bottle. If you refuse to forgive me, it is much better for me to die." She rushed into the bath-room. While there, she imitated a person vomiting. She expected, perhaps, that Malcolm would run to her and beg of her to desist, but he lay quite unconcerned. He felt perfectly certain this was a trap to get him to yield. She came back to the room. "I have drunk half of the bottle," she said, "and I shall drink the other half to-night, before I go to bed, so that I shall die, peaceably in my sleep."

Malcolm laughed.

"Why do you laugh?" she cried.

"Because Martha I am certain that you know as well as I do, that a quarter of that bottle is quite sufficient to kill ten persons. No my dear, you will be spared the trouble of taking a second dose."

"You brute, you are making fun of me," she said, and flung the bottle at him. It missed him and crashed against the wall. Malcolm looked at the pieces and burst out laughing.

"Why are you laughing again?" she demanded.

"Martha," he replied, "the next time you

drink Belladonna, dear, try doing so after removing the seal and the cork."

"Very well, you think I am not in earnest, Do you? I'll cut my throat to-night with your razor. Where is it?"

"I refuse to abet suicide," he said, "but really Martha you will find such a death a very painful one. Why not try to drown yourself in the bath tub?" And why do you want to die in the dead of night? Isn't it safer for you and more convenient to others, to die in the broad of day?"

She burst into tears and threw herself at his bed. She was on her knees. "Malcolm, Malcolm, you are making fun of me," she cried, "forgive me, forgive me. How was I to know that you were suddenly going to change like this? Is it right to change so suddenly and so completely? Is there to be no forgiveness in this world? Say you forgive me Malcolm. I'll do anything you want. I'll go away for two, three or even four years if you don't want me now, but promise me that you will forgive me and bring me back. And you can bring back all your relatives, I'll live amicably with them. I am not really bad Malcolm, believe me, I am not."

He was on the point of yielding, but he felt that he would be very weak if he did so.

"Get up," he said, "and do your best for the future. I cannot forgive you now, but

how can I speak definitely of the future. I am not by nature a hard man. Fix your hopes on that. When I married you I resolved never to be cross or angry with you, but time has made me put aside my resolution. Now I am resolved to treat you in strict justice. I cannot forgive you at present but time may bring about a change. Much, of course, will depend on your behaviour. Get up, please, and begin your new life. The old one was a failure. It has satisfied neither you nor me. The change may be for the better. Who knows?"

She rose and stood erect before him. He could not help but admire her beauty. Yea, in this new sorrow she looked more beautiful than she ever did.

"I'll take your advice Malcolm, to show you that I mean to be a changed woman and I shall yet earn your forgiveness. I shall not die without it. When I am dying I shall, with my dying breath, plead for it, but I shall get it, not because I plead, but because I shall earn it. You speak of treating me in strict justice, in strict justice I shall wring your forgiveness from you."

After Martha's behaviour Malcolm was more than ever determined not to surrender Gwendolyn. She was all he had in the world. The only one who understood him. She had repeatedly told him that she would remain his for ever. Had he any right to hurt her feelings by suggesting that she should marry

some one else? Gwendolyn was his twin soul. He had found her, and no good was likely to result in his attempting to break the bonds that linked them. Time had certainly brought its changes. He was, for instance, sure that when the probationary period of five years was over he would not exact the fulfilment of the promise she had given him. But to give her up, no, he could never do that. He could not live to see her the wife of another man, even though that man was his brother. He was foolish to have promised Charles to write on his behalf, but it was due to the impression Hathaway's arguments had left on him. As he reviewed the matter deliberately he actually became thankful to Martha for her behaviour. This brought him back to consider Martha's position. Of course he would forgive her, indeed he had forgiven her already, but it would be quite injudicious to tell her so. It was plain to him that he could never be the same to her again but he could not be so hard hearted as not to forgive her. He had to forgive her, if for no other reason, because of his promise to Gwendolyn.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### Desertion.

Gwendolyn had just returned from school and was sitting in a low chair in the verandah when she was startled by a voice addressing her.

"What a fright you did give me Mr. Wensley? Who ever expected to see you in Bombay? When did you come in? but wait, I have not shook hands with you. Now won't you take off your hat and sit down?"

He dropped into the chair nearest to hers and placed his hat on the floor beside him. "No, no" said Charles, as Gwendolyn moved in the direction of an upright chair, "make yourself as comfortable as before. You looked simply charming Miss Carpenter as—"

"Now Mr. Wensley don't do that. You mustn't say things you don't mean."

"Excuse me, I meant what I was going to say. There—"

She interrupted him again. "What brings you to Bombay Mr. Wensley? The last time we met, it was at the Custom's Ball wasn't it? you told me most emphatically that you would never go to Bombay as you couldn't think of wasting your time in such a place. How soon you men change."



This remark upset Charles considerably. "How clever women are," he said to himself. "She must have received Malcolm's letter by now and she knows why I am here and yet how well she is pretending ignorance." On further reflection he realized that it was impossible for Gwendolyn to act otherwise, unless she wished to snub him or to be immodest, and that it was kind and considerate of her to have herself turned the conversation in the right channel so as to make it less difficult for him to speak. Taking this view he jumped to the conclusion that Gwendolyn favoured his suit and that it only remained for him to speak. He was whistling slowly and twisting his hair, his eyes were riveted on the floor and he was wondering how he ought to begin, when Gwendolyn burst out laughing.

"Really Mr. Wensley you are wool gathering." He immediately stopped twisting his hair.

"Miss Carpenter" he said, "I have come all the way to Bombay to get something of priceless value to me. It is possible for you to help me." He halted and realized how foolishly he was talking and he cursed himself for it, especially as he had spent the better part of his journey of forty hours in rehearsing, time after time, how he would address her on the question that was of vital importance to him."

"Miss. Carpenter" he began again, "have you heard from Malcolm lately?" He stam-

mered and shivered as he asked her this question.

Forgetfully she replied. "Yes, only to-day." She was thinking of the love letter she had obtained from the Post Office on her way home from school. She had hardly finished reading it when Charles had called.

Charles felt he was on safe ground and that he was improving matters a bit. "Well Miss. Carpenter, what do you say about it?"

Gwendolyn gave a start. How could she possibly discuss Malcolm's love letter to her with anyone? What did his question mean? Had he discovered her secret? She shuddered and turned a trifle pale.

Charles noticed the change in her and took it for a favourable sign. He waited patiently for her to reply, biting his nails in the meantime.

"I don't know what you will think of me but I have been keeping you here without offering you a cup of tea. Mother will never forgive me if she hears of my inattention and bad manners." Saying this she rose quickly from her chair.

Charles jumped up from his also. He stood in front of the door leading to the house. Up till then he had not been sure whether Mrs. Carpenter was out. Now that he knew she was, he realized that he could

scarcely wish for a more favourable opportunity of pressing his suit: "Please don't go Miss. Carpenter," he said, "let us sit down and talk. I am sure your mother will be more pleased if we waited and had our tea with her."

"In that case even you must excuse me for a few minutes Mr. Wensley. I must get the tea and toast ready and put the tea things out. You do look so tired."

"Not at all. On the contrary I had tea at the boarding house at which I am staying, before I came out. I should have told you this before, but I don't know why my mind seems to be in a whirl. I can't quite collect my thoughts, and you must consider me positively devoid of all good manners, I have not yet enquired after your mother. How is she keeping and how long is she likely to be away?"

"Mother is quite well, Mr. Wensley, thank you, but she is getting on in years, and can't be over careful. She will be here presently. I am not so sure that it is not her coming up the stairs."

"Miss. Carpenter" stammered Charles, as he heard what he took to be Mrs. Carpenter's foot steps, "I, I, I——" And he walked up to her and laid hold of her hand.

"You must not do that Mr. Wensley. Please let my hand go."

"I will if you wish it, Gwen. But Gwen, surely you know why I have come to Bombay."

"To buy something of priceless value isn't it?"

"Don't tease me, Gwendolyn. I am dying to hear your answer. Gwendolyn, Gwendolyn I love you. Say that you can find it possible to love me in return. Promise Gwendolyn to be my wife."

She let her hand remain in his. "Charles," she said "how sorry I am for you. I like you very much." She was almost going to say, "I love you because you are *my Malcolm's* brother," but she checked herself in time, "but I cannot marry you Charles. I have made up my mind never to get married."

"Gwendolyn, do reconsider the matter? Do give me some hope? Have you taken into account all that Malcolm must have told you?"

A cold shudder passed through her as he made this remark. She was convinced now he had discovered her secret.

"He must have pleaded for me Gwendolyn. I know it, and I know also that next to your mother he has great influence with you. Do give me some hope Gwendolyn? I was cruel in approaching you so quickly but I could not really wait. When I come to think of it, I have loved you from the first day I saw you. From the first day I saw you, your face has been photographed on my memory. I do so want to settle down and be happy, and

Gwendolyn, I can be happy with no other woman but you."

"Charles I am very sorry for you. I would do anything to please both you and Malcolm, except this. I cannot Charles. I dare not even explain to you why. Come, Charles, forget about this and let us be good friends."

"Don't trouble to say any more Gwendolyn," he remarked, in a low rough tone as he released her hand. "I know exactly the cause of your refusal."

He was sure that she refused him because of the stories that Martha must have told her about Mrs. Spencer.

And Gwendolyn, what of her? She felt sure that Charles knew her secret.

When Charles returned to Calcutta he resigned his appointment and went away to British East Africa. He failed to see Malcolm before he left.

More than four years had now elapsed since Gwendolyn had made her fateful promise. In April of the following year she again went as usual to Calcutta to spend her Summer holidays with Martha and Malcolm. Gwendolyn and Malcolm knew Martha was still perfectly unsuspecting of the relationship in which they stood to one another, and they were thus able to move about and remain freely in one another's company. While Malcolm thought very little of the five years' agreement, Gwendolyn,

on the other hand, was feeling very uneasy about it. At times she almost regretted that she had made the promise. A week before she left Calcutta, Malcolm took her out to a concert at the Dalhousie Institute. One of the ladies sang, "The Island of Dreams." When she came to the portion, "The waiting is over," Malcolm without meaning anything definite pressed Gwendolyn's hand. This little incident completely unnerved her and she began to be afraid of him. She avoided him during the remaining days of her holidays and completely broke down on the night of her departure. Malcolm ascribed the change in her behaviour to the sense of loneliness she felt in having to leave him. He had already applied for leave from August of that year which was just about the time the five years expired. His last words to her as the train steamed out, were: "Keep smiling, Gwen, Martha and I will see you in August. That's only two months more." She shuddered. She considered it very unfair of him to have thus reminded her twice in the course of the week of her promise to him.

One morning early in July while Malcolm was shaving himself, Martha entered his room waving a letter in her hand: "This came yesterday Malcolm" she said, "I was so busy, I forgot to tell you about it. Read it and confess you are always wrong and I am always right."

"I wish you would not disturb me, Martha," he replied, "you know I don't like reading letters addressed to you. Tell me the news, please."

"Didn't I always say that Gwendolyn would marry? Well, Mrs. Carpenter says she is to be married next month."

Malcolm's hand trembled, his razor dropped to the floor and the blade snapped in two.

"Look what you have done Martha," he cried, "I asked you not to disturb me."

"How impossible it is to get on with you Malcolm: Sometime ago you seemed cross because I didn't tell you the same day of a letter from Mrs. Carpenter in which she said that Gwendolyn was not very well; you pretended at the time that you are very concerned about my friends. If you are, why are you not interested to hear about her marriage? I wish you were what Mrs. Carpenter says Gwendolyn's young man is. A pure European and a perfect gentleman. Do you hear? *A pure European and a perfect gentleman.*"

"If you don't leave the room I shall do so myself," said Malcolm, "and he went into the bath room and banged the door behind him."

"All women are alike," he said to himself. "There is not one bit of real difference. Sooner or later they appear in their true colours. I pinned my faith to Gwendolyn, I thought her an angel. I worshipped her. I could never have

imagined that she could have been guilty of any wrong, least of all, of deceitfulness." (He forgot how cleverly she had deceived Martha and her mother during the last five years). "What a fool I was not to realize that she was only playing with me and getting the best she could out of me. I see it all now, she was carrying on with both of us at the same time and now that she finds she can't get me, she has decided to marry that *perfect gentleman*, Mr. Moneybag. She has dismissed me even without an explanation. Why the Manager of the theatre was more considerate, he had offered me a month's pay in lieu of notice." He was about to call her names but he controlled himself. "No, no," he said, "even though she has deceived me she has made me happy for these last five years. It is more than any one else has. I have much to be thankful to her for. After all she has merely been worldly wise. I can't blame her. If I were a bachelor it would have been different, no doubt. I would have married her." And then he thought of Martha, and he thought more kindly of her than he had done for many years past. "It seems to me," he said, "if there is one thing Martha can be depended upon for, it is straight-forwardness. Martha would never be deceitful."

At breakfast Malcolm was very irritable. He found fault with every thing that was placed before him. He complained that the mutton was obtained from old Michelin Motor Car tyres, and that the rice was so over-boiled



as to remind him of the stickphast that was used in the shop.

Martha only angered him more by telling him that he had taken three years to find out that the cook had invested some of his savings in the Popular Motor Car Company. As a result Malcolm sent for the cook and summarily dispensed with his services.

As he was leaving the house Martha called out to him. "Don't fail to be home by six this evening Malcolm: Gwendolyn's young-man, who is in Calcutta, is coming to see us."

"Oh go to the devil," he snapped, and hurried down the stairs.

The next two hours he spent in anathematizing Mr. Moneybag. He called him a traitor, a bandit, a sly fox and many other names except a perfect gentleman. And he thought of the day when Gwendolyn turned her back on him and of the letter in her writing pad.

With his tiffin Martha sent him a note. It ran thus:

My dear Malcolm,

I think you ought to read Mrs. Carpenter's letter before Gwendolyn's young man calls. After your absurd outburst of temper this morning I do not know whether I am to expect you home this evening. I do hope you will be back in time. I do not like to meet a stranger alone.

Your loving,  
MARTHA.

Malcolm was delighted at receiving this communication: He wanted so much to see exactly what Mrs. Carpenter had said, but did not know how, after his behaviour of the morning, he was to ask Martha to let him see the letter.

This is what Mrs. Carpenter wrote. "Both of you will no doubt be quite glad to hear that Gwendolyn has accepted an offer of marriage from a Mr. Crow." When Malcolm saw the name Crow instead of Moneybag he nearly fell out of his chair. "He belongs to a firm in Calcutta which deals in explosives. He is doing quite well, gets about six or seven hundred rupees a month, and what is more important seems a perfect gentleman. He is a pure European and is very handsome. I told Gwen that she must write to you herself and tell you all about him. Mr. Crow was here the other night. He returns to Calcutta to-morrow. I have made him promise he will call and see you the same day. He promised to call after office, that is about six in the afternoon."

While Martha and Malcolm sat in the drawing room, Martha opened the conversation. "How lucky Gwendolyn is, Malcolm, fancy getting a good man, a handsome man, a man so well off and above all a pure European."

"I am afraid Martha I must reserve my opinion until I see Mr. Crow, but I am sure I wish Gwendolyn every luck."

"Just so—No one I suppose could be as good as your brother."

"Better the devil you know than—"

"I think you are very rude Malcolm in calling Gwendolyn's affianced husband a devil."

"I beg your pardon, I didn't go as far as that," he replied.

Mr. Crow called precisely at six. He drove up in a motor car. He was a decidedly handsome man. His manners appeared excellent. The only point on which Malcolm wished to be satisfied was whether Crow was really a good man, whether he was the sort of man who would make Gwen happy, though from a knowledge of her character and disposition he felt sure that she would be happy with almost any one and in any circumstances. Her tastes were simple, and her temperament so calm that it would be an impossibility not to satisfy her. Naturally he began with a feeling of prejudice against Crow, how could it have been otherwise? He would have to live to see Crow the husband of the girl who for five years wrote quite spontaneously that she would remain his for ever. Once more he experienced a feeling of disgust at Gwendolyn's behaviour, but at the same time he realized he loved her still. Why the love in him was not all killed in a second he did not understand. Suddenly a thought struck him. "Could it be possible she had taken

this step to avoid meeting him at the end of the agreed period of five years. It might be that," he reflected, but almost immediately he felt something within him saying, "Look at Crow again. Is it any wonder she has fallen in love with him. If you can't yet understand the position look at him carefully once more and then look at yourself in a mirror. Well, well," he mused, "I find it almost impossible to believe that Gwen would take this step without consulting me," and then it occurred to him that she had faithfully promised that she would consult him, and take his advice before she consented to marry any man. What, what were her promises worth? She had every right to marry and to choose her husband, but surely she should have kept her promise if she was anything of the fine woman he had imagined she was. It then came back to him that he in turn had made several promises to her. Among others he had promised her of his own accord always to look to her interests and he had vowed that he would never misunderstand her. He had often read in novels how misunderstandings, which have wrecked lives, have been occasioned by one or other of the parties concerned not speaking out. He immediately resolved what he should do. "I'll make whatever enquiries I can concerning Crow in the course of the next week and then I'll take a trip to Bombay and hear from Gwen's own lips what she has to say." It was a matter of life and death to him. It might

be a matter of life and death to Gwendolyn. He must see her, and he must see before Crow saw her again.

Crow stayed for an hour and had tea with them. He told them that he had been out for the last two years. It was the first time he was in India. He had come out on a three years' agreement at the expiry of which he was to be provided for in the Head Offices at Birmingham. "How nice that will be for Gwendolyn," he said. "What a beauty she will look with a rosy face and pink cheeks. Poor darling, she does seem quite run down by the heat of India," Malcolm was about to tell him that although she was fair she was a girl of the country, but Martha suspecting what he was about to say quickly interrupted. "She was not always like that Mr. Crow. Girls always get like that when they are in love. After you are married she will look her old self again."

"Do you imply Martha that once a girl gets married she looks old and ceases to be in love?" Malcolm enquired.

"You are always too clever Malcolm. You know what I mean Mr. Crow?"

"Of course I do, although I have no experience in the matter. Mrs. Wensley, Gwendolyn is my very first sweetheart. You can hardly imagine how happy she was when I told her so," said Crow, and as he spoke he looked at

Martha and winked at her. There was no mistake about the matter. He winked in quite a wicked way and Malcolm, who was watching him like a tiger, saw it all too clearly.

Malcolm knew the man was lying. He hated him. He who had never hated anyone before in his life. And what was it, was his brain playing him strange tricks? for he noticed that Crow wore what looked to him to be an iron cross on his watch chain, which he had seen before, and which in an instant he recognised had been worn by that cad, Waterloo, who was his travelling companion when he journeyed up from Bombay. He realized that Crow looked considerably younger with his moustache removed and that it was due to this change that he had failed to recognise him at once, but he had little doubt that Waterloo and Crow were one and the same person. "He told us, he had only been in India for two years," said Malcolm to himself, "*that* was nearly five years ago. His name was then Waterloo, why is it now Crow? The man is a swindler. He is a humbug. He has by trickery got my darling into his coils. I will release her. If I am to shed the last drop of my blood in doing so I will gladly shed it for her welfare. Not a moment's delay must occur in my doing so. I must leave to-morrow for Bombay and see Gwendolyn and convince her of the danger she is in."

After Crow left, Malcolm told Martha that

he had some canvassing work to do, and that he would be leaving Calcutta the next night, and would be away for about a week. The following morning he telegraphed to the Head Office for permission to proceed on leave at once, and he left for Bombay the same night, although a reply had not been received to his telegram. He was prepared to run the risk of losing his appointment than suffer another day's delay in releasing his beloved.

As he approached Mrs. Carpenter's house he looked up at the window of Gwendolyn's bed room and to his delight he saw her peeping out. He was about to wave his hand to her when she quickly withdrew her head. He noticed that she was looking exceedingly haggard and pale, and that the sight of him, instead of making her look pleased, seemed to accentuate her paleness.

Mrs. Carpenter admitted him. "This is an agreeable surprise Malcolm, why didn't you let us know you were coming?"

"I am here on some very confidential business Mrs. Carpenter," he explained, "my firm does not desire that any one in Calcutta should know that I have been sent here to obtain certain information I require. In prudence I had to leave Calcutta without even telling Martha that I was coming here."

"Quite right, Mr. Wensley," she said, "you would make an excellent diplomatist. If you

were in England you would soon find your way into the Foreign Department."

They both laughed.

"How long are you going to stay, Malcolm?"

"It all depends on the business," he replied, "I may have to leave to-night if everything is settled."

"How forgetful I am," she said, "wait, I must go and tell Gwendolyn that you have come. She is always glad to see you and now that she is to be married I think I can safely tell you a secret, Malcolm. Do you know Gwendolyn is really very fond of you? Often she has told me that if ever she married she would marry some man like you, and she can never speak sufficiently of all your good points. I wonder if this Crow is just like you."

"Mrs. Carpenter," he said, "I am not like a crow."

Again they both laughed.

"Malcolm," said Mrs. Carpenter as she re-entered the hall, "I don't know what to make of Gwendolyn. She has actually asked to be excused from seeing you, on the plea that she is not feeling well. I told her point blank that she had no right to plead such an excuse when you have come all the way from Calcutta to congratulate her. Really Malcolm I don't know what to make of Gwendolyn lately. She seemed to have made up her mind all too quickly to marry Mr. Crow and instead of



being happy since, she is fretting herself away to death, and her behaviour is quite unusual. At times I feel driven to put an end to this affair although I like the man. He is well off, so handsome, of good birth and so religious, and he seems a perfect gentleman. Besides, Malcolm, it is a lot to get married to a pure European in these days. I spoke to her and asked her to be candid with me and to tell me whether she really loves Mr. Crow and if so why she does not appear to be happy, but I can get nothing definite out of her. I threatened one day to write to Mr. Crow and break off the engagement, but she told me that I would wreck her life if I did so. Really—really Malcolm, girls are quite different now to what they were in my time. The moment I fell in love with Gwen's father I could do nothing else but dance for joy," as she said this she shed a tear.

Malcolm felt he had no right to insist on thrusting himself on Gwen that day if she refused to see him, so he called out "Sorry you are ill Gwen, thought you'd care to come out for an hour after breakfast. It always gives me much pleasure to take you out and I suppose this will be the last opportunity, as once you are married your hubby will not allow you to go to restaurants with me. But if you are not well to-day I will wait till to-morrow or the day after, unless I am compelled to leave. I have been allowed a week in all to get through my business, so that I can stay in Bombay for three days if I wish."

"You shan't stay back on my account Malcolm," she called out, "I am feeling very ill but I will have a hot bath and come out for breakfast. If I am feeling well enough I will go out with you but I can't promise."

Malcolm's heart leaped with joy. "This is so like Gwen," he said to himself. "If I have to wait a year I am determined I will do so and tell her my story before I return to Calcutta."

Gwendolyn came out for breakfast. She appeared to have taken exceptional care with her toilet and she dressed herself in a white Swiss embroidered muslin dress. It was one of the frocks she had bought in Calcutta and in which Malcolm often told her she looked most charming. To-day she appeared to him, as always, the most beautiful creature in all the world. He could not however help but notice that her cheeks were pale and her eyes dull and sunken, with large rings round them, but even if they detracted from her beauty they still left her, in his eyes, incomparable.

During breakfast Gwendolyn informed Malcolm that she was really feeling too fatigued to go out but, if he could spare the time, she would sit up for an hour or so after breakfast and talk to him.

When breakfast was over, Mrs. Carpenter told them that she had some shopping to do and asked Malcolm if he would excuse her for just a few minutes. As she left the room she motioned

to him to follow her. He did so. "Malcolm," she said, "I have no shopping to do. It is only a blind. I wanted to leave you and Gwendolyn alone. You have some influence with her, try and find out Malcolm, whether she really loves this man Crow, and, if so, why she frets so much. She is quite absent-minded, she hardly eats anything and I can't get a word out of her, although she talks in her sleep."

"Is it possible she is fretting because he is away Mrs. Carpenter?"

"I am afraid not, Malcolm, but one can never understand or account for her actions, but you do try, lad. I am very distressed over it all. I do wish she would confide in me. A girl's best friend is her mother. But where I have failed, you might succeed. Try Malcolm, Try for her sake if not for mine. When I look back I feel it a great punishment that not one of my children have enjoyed happiness in their married life. I was never sure of the others. I always felt that I was sure of Gwen, but now I feel more doubtful of her than of all the rest put together. None of them behaved like this before the marriage, and if it is like this now, what will it be after the marriage. Do your best Malcolm please, I shall be away for an hour but lose no time in getting to the point, Gwen will do her best to avoid it."

"I am afraid Mrs. Carpenter the task is a very delicate one, but I shall do my best not

only for your sake but because I have always been very fond of Gwendolyn."

"You are a good boy, Malcolm, and you are also clever, I know you will succeed."

Malcolm raced up the stairs. Gwendolyn was reclining on a sofa, her head thrown fully back. He drew a chair and sat directly opposite her so that he could look into her face as he spoke to her. He purposed following Mrs. Carpenter's advice and getting to the point at once, but before he could say a word Gwendolyn herself, to his surprise, opened the conversation on the subject.

"Malcolm," she said, "would not it have been wiser if you did not come to see me? This interview is not likely to serve any useful purpose and it can only be painful both to you and to me."

"Gwendolyn," he replied, in a shaky voice, "you shall first hear me. After you have, I feel confident that you will change your opinion and that you will thank me for having come."

"Don't say I am not thankful that you have come to see me, Malcolm, that would be too cruel. I quite realize what has prompted you to come, but I say again Malcolm that it would have been wiser if you did not. Can't you understand from this Malcolm that my mind is made up and that anything you may have to say will not make me alter my decision?"

"You shall hear me Gwendolyn, the man

you have promised to marry is a fraud. His name is not Crow any more than mine is. You must remember the story I told you five years ago, of a man named Waterloo, who behaved like a cad to a lady travelling from Kalyan to Igatpuri. The man who now calls himself Crow was Waterloo then. How can you possibly link yourself in wedlock to such a man?"

"Malcolm! what definite proof have you that his name is not Crow? Did he tell you on the previous occasion that his name was Waterloo? Did you hear anyone call him by that name?"

"No," he replied, "but I saw the name on his trunks. It seemed a mania with him. Everything was labelled Waterloo."

"He might have been travelling with some one else's trunks Malcolm. How readily you men jump to conclusions. You met him at Calcutta. You suspected him of being, as you say, a fraud. Have you made any enquiries? Can you prove anything? You only saw this man whom you call Waterloo once, five years ago. It is quite possible that you are mistaken in imagining Mr. Crow, to be Mr. Waterloo."

It now struck Malcolm that he had acted rather hastily in hurrying away to Bombay, without making sufficient enquiry into the antecedents and present life of Crow. It was the sight of that Iron Cross that made him do

so. He had to admit he had no tangible proof of anything but he was determined to make every effort to persuade Gwendolyn to promise at least that she would not fix the date of her marriage until he had made the necessary enquiries."

"Gwendolyn," he addressed her again, "please don't think that I am actuated by selfish motives. If this man is not wholly bad, and if you really love him, I am sure you will find happiness in your married life. But I have doubts Gwen. I will not leave you until I hear the truth from your lips. Remember Gwendolyn that you promised to seek my advice when anyone approached you in marriage and you were disposed to accept the offer. You promised me that you would take no decision until you referred the matter to me and heard what I had to say. Can you suppose that I made this proposal from a selfish point of view Gwendolyn? You know better Gwendolyn, you know it was entirely in your interests that it was made. Tell me this first, Gwen. Why did you break this promise?"

"Oh Malcolm," she sobbed, "How can you. I always believed that if I did anything I would never break a promise I had made, much more a promise to you. I have always thought that a person who breaks a promise is a despicable being. I myself would not have much respect for one who did. Holding such views can't you imagine how I am suffering for having

broken faith with you? You can't understand it all Malcolm, you can't, so don't try. Pity me Malcolm, pity me and leave me. God who knows everything, who knows the very secrets of our hearts, will understand all my actions and will care for me. The life here is too short Malcolm to risk the happiness of eternity."

He had come resolved to tell her what his views were in regard to the agreement they made as to their conduct after the five years. But he had promised not to speak about the subject until the time had passed. Having just heard her views on the subject of a broken promise his lips were sealed.

"Gwendolyn," he said, "you will believe me when I say it is far from my heart to cause you uneasiness or pain. I seek only to serve you. Tell me Gwendolyn whether you love this man or not, if you don't, tell me why you are marrying him."

She stood up, "Malcolm," she pleaded with tears in her eyes, as she spoke, "Can't you leave it, can't you leave it? It is too late. I have given my promise. Can I ever break such a promise?"

He fell on his knees and held both her hands in his. She looked at him just for a brief second and he saw in her eyes the fire of the love she bore for him. Yes, he was convinced that she loved him still and if at all that her love had increased and not diminished. There-

fore notwithstanding her obvious suffering this spurred him to press his case.

"Come, come," he entreated, "you are evading my questions, Gwendolyn, tell me whether you love this man." As he spoke he pulled her hands down a bit in the hope that she would bend forward, and he would see her face again. But she turned her head away to a side.

"Malcolm, Malcolm. Don't look at me. Don't look at me. I can't bear it. When you look at me I feel that you can read my innermost soul. I feel that you can make me do anything you want. Your influence over me is too great Malcolm, have pity on me, Malcolm. Release me. Can't you see that it is too late to make any change. Yes, Malcolm, you can, so get up and let us drop the subject and be good friends and I will go out with you Malcolm, and we will spend a happy day together, and I will go out with you again tomorrow and the day after. But we must not talk of this subject, again."

"Gwendolyn you shall answer me. I shall not release you until you do. If you love this man tell me so and I will have nothing more to say, for I know you will be happy. But if you don't love him, I shall kill him if you persist in this mad idea of marrying him."

He bent down and kissed her feet.

"I love you Gwendolyn, I worship you.



But for you and your love I should have died long years ago or have been a loafer in the streets. I have lived for you and you alone these last five years. But yet again I assure you I do not seek my own but your happiness. If you love this man you will not pain me too much if you tell me the truth. I shall know you have found happiness and this knowledge will give me pleasure, but don't deceive me Gwen. In the name of God don't keep me in suspense. Speak, speak."

"I am sure I shall be happy in my married life Malcolm. There you have my answer. Please don't continue this any longer, Malcolm, I feel quite faint."

He released her hands. They were as cold as ice. He stood up and faced her. "Good bye," he said, "you have my best wishes for your future happiness. You know me well enough to believe that I say this in sincerity. It will, however, be impossible for me to see you after this and you will spare me by not seeing me again. But I am your friend as much as I have ever been. If ever you are in trouble and need assistance or advice write to me. I shall never fail you and I shall never cease to love you and to worship you" and he turned to go.

"Malcolm, don't leave me like this. Come and kiss me before you go, and do change your mind Malcolm and promise that you will come and see me now and again. I can never

forget you Malcolm. Come, come and kiss me, just this once."

He felt like rushing to her and taking her into his arms, but he realized if he did so he would surely succumb to the temptation within him of telling her he could not give her up and of imploring her to remain his.

"No, no, Gwen," he replied, "in the circumstances it is better we parted without it," and he walked towards the door.

She ran after him like one demented. They were now on the open balcony. "Malcolm, Malcolm, don't go without kissing me, and blessing me, and tell me that you forgive me for having broken my promise to you. Someday you will understand it all, Malcolm. I know too well all that you have suffered. I cannot bear to think you may suffer on my account. Come back into the hall Malcolm and if you won't kiss me, let me kiss you just for once and rest my head on your breast and you must promise me that you will take care of yourself and—"

But even as she spoke Mrs. Carpenter was at the foot of the stairs. As soon as Gwendolyn saw her mother she drew back and returned to the hall. Malcolm walked down the steps and met Mrs. Carpenter midway.

"Well," she said, "what luck have you had?"

"I cannot say I have been very successful Mrs. Carpenter. Gwen has admitted to me that she loves Crow. That is all I was able to get out of her. She is a sensible girl and as she loves the man, I don't think you need have any anxiety on her account. The fact that she is behaving differently from the others before the marriage indicates, I suppose, that she regards the step as a serious one. It is a good omen for the future and her married life is sure to be different from the others. I shall always pray for her happiness. Night and day I shall."

"You are wrong Malcolm," she replied, "for once in your life you are wrong. You have failed to find out the truth."

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### Shop Talk.

Two months later Gwendolyn was married. Martha went to Bombay for the wedding. Malcolm pleaded the excuse of inability to obtain leave of absence to get away. Since his last interview with Gwendolyn life had become quite different to him. He felt alone in the world, but the utter loneliness in which he found himself, made him think more of God and less of the world. Gradually his old habits returned. His belief was more refined and deeper and he took a broader and more charitable view of the different divisions of the Christian religion. Indeed to a large extent he felt that all religions under the sun were ordained by God to assist men to lead good and moral lives and to bring them to Him. Much of the change was due to Gwendolyn's example. He moved about with a desire to do good to the sick or afflicted and to help the necessitous. For the achievement of this end he regularly visited the hospitals and homes. He seldom had any form of amusement or sought any. Although his heart was filled with a great sorrow he had found peace of mind. Often he would sit for hours and think of Gwendolyn. Of all that they had been to one another, of all that they wished they could have been. He never had a harsh thought for her. She still

continued to be his ideal. He heard nothing of her or from her except what Martha told him occasionally, and from this he gathered that she was well and not unhappy. He was glad for her sake that things were moving well. His relations with Martha remained the same outwardly but in his heart he pitied her very considerably. He certainly loved her, not in the way he loved her before Gwendolyn had visited them, or before the fatal rupture that took place between them, but as he would a good sister, and at times when she was not looking at him he would look at her and say to himself, "Poor girl, what a great deal she has lost by her bad temper and selfish and cold nature. What a different husband I would have been to her if only she had behaved differently." And he pitied her yet for another reason. It was all too obvious to him that she was rapidly declining in health. On many occasions he spoke to her, advising her to send for a doctor but she was obdurate. "I am quite well Malcolm," she would reply quietly but firmly, "I have no need to see the doctor. Please don't trouble to send for one."

Most of her time she spent in reading novels. She never went out now, and few of her friends ever visited her. As time went on Malcolm became more anxious on her account. As she still refused to see a doctor he had to take one into his confidence. He therefore turned to his friend, Dr. Matesky. Dr. Matesky instructed Malcolm to watch Martha's symptoms and

movements and to report the result to him after a week. He did so. When he had told the Doctor all that he had observed he noticed that the Doctor seemed a bit touched. "Wensley," he said, "I suspect something serious: Your wife must see a doctor. Has she any relatives who are medical men? Can't you persuade one of them to insist on examining her?"

"That's a good idea," Malcolm replied. "It is a wonder I didn't think of it myself. I'll arrange it Doctor. You can't imagine how thankful I am to you for the suggestion."

Malcolm took an early opportunity of seeing Mr. Clay, Martha's uncle, and told him the facts of the case. Dr. Clay was stationed at Patna but promised to run down very soon and see Martha. Ten days later he called. Malcolm expressed great surprise and delight to see him. Martha was very glad to see him, but Malcolm noticed that she went pale when he said, "My dear girl whatever is the matter with you? but thee don't worry, I'll put you right before I return this evening."

Malcolm had to go to work as usual but he returned immediately after lunch. It was marvellous how soon Dr. Clay had succeeded in his mission. It was no wonder he was so successful a practitioner.

On the first occasion when they were alone, he addressed Malcolm on the subject of Martha's health.

"How much leave have you at your credit Malcolm?"

"About two years, Uncle."

Then put in for it at once and get away to the Continent.

Six months after Malcolm had proceeded on leave, Wilkinson the Manager of the Warehouse also went on leave and the next senior assistant on duty, Hathaway, was appointed to officiate. Wilkinson was a man born in the country. He was the son of a Civil Engineer and had commenced his life in a superior position as a covenanted assistant in the firm.

Hathaway sat in the Manager's seat of the European Warehouse feeling quite pleased with himself and the world at large. He had not done a stroke of work since the morning. Everyone who came into the shop who knew him wanted to see him and congratulate him on his promotion. He had every reason to be satisfied with himself. He had just turned thirty five years of age and the appointment he filled carried a salary of a thousand and five hundred rupees a month.

After he had been congratulated for the twentyfifth time he took off his coat, lit his cigar, one of Spencer's best havanahs, and was poring through the pile of letters that lay before him. He wished it could be possible for him to instruct his chaprassee to inform

callers that he was out, but this he knew would never do. He could never be sure that business matters and the interests of the firm would not suffer as a result, and besides it was not quite the right way for him to begin in his new appointment. He had often marvelled how Wilkinson found sufficient time to see everyone who called on him and yet get through all his work by the evening. While he was reading a four sheet foolscap letter, from the Firm's lawyers, the contents of which he could not quite readily grasp, he sat back with the flicker of annoyance in his clean set face, for before him stood the very last man in the world he would have liked to have seen at the moment.

The intruder was Patrick McCarthy, a young Irishman who had been out in the country barely six months.

"Cheer oh, Cheer oh Hathaway," he literally screamed as soon as Hathaway had raised his eyes from his work, "I've just heard that you are to be Manager here while that fellow, what's his name? Wilkinson isn't it, is away on leave and I dropped in to congratulate you."

'Thank you McCarthy,' Hathaway replied peevishly.

McCarthy threw himself into a chair. "My dear fellow," he said. "What on earth made your Directors ever appoint Wilkinson



to the top. Your business must have suffered frightfully while he has been in charge. No country-born fellow, especially if he is coloured, should be put to the top of any business house. It spells failure. Besides who'll meet the fellow on equal terms. He can't belong to any good Club."

"But he does McCarthy. He's a member of the Savoy Club which is as good as any in Calcutta."

"Oh, that may be, but there's a certain social standing or status which he can never attain. He can't go everywhere for instance like you and me."

Hathaway became annoyed. He forgot his work. The many years he had worked together with Wilkinson and Wensley and the last two years he had worked under Wilkinson had opened his eyes to many things he didn't understand before. He had the greatest admiration for them and he held their work in high esteem. He could not bear to hear either of them spoken off disparagingly, and he also felt keenly that the Eurasian or the class to which Wilkinson said he belonged was not properly understood or quite fairly treated. He therefore retorted harshly.

"You are quite wrong, McCarthy. You are one of the many who don't understand this class of people at all. You are unreasonably and unjustly prejudiced. One can forgive you as you have only been out for such a short

while and haven't had sufficient time to see things for yourself, but I have no patience with others who are so blind that they won't see. It's no secret that as one of our Directors is a man of this sort there was some talk when the appointment fell vacant of getting out a man from home, but as there was some difficulty it was very reluctantly decided to give Wilkinson a trial. I assure you the Directors never did a better day's work than when they appointed him as Manager. We've done twice as well during the last two years."

"Oh chuck it, that's due entirely to the great boom in trade. See how you'll get on. Trade's very brisk just now."

"On the contrary to tell you the truth I am jolly well afraid that I'll not get on at all. It's beastly difficult to succeed a man like Wilkinson. One suffers so much by comparison. He knows everything about everything. Here I have been at it since the morning and haven't done a stroke of work."

"By the way Hathaway, what's the fellow actually?"

"Oh that's a poser. I suppose most fellows in his position would call themselves Anglo Indians, but Wilkinson does not, he says he's a Eurasian. What the actual difference is between the two I don't really understand, except that ignorant people think the poorer man is the Eurasian and the man who is

tolerably well off, is, or should call himself, an Anglo Indian."

"Cheer oh, Cheer oh. I know some very good stories about these people; shall I tell them to you?"

"Get along if it will amuse you."

Hathaway knew McCarthy well enough to realise that nothing would prevent his relating a story when he wanted to."

"Now let's see" began McCarthy. "Number one is about a fellow. What shall we call him? Let's say Thomas Brown, that's a common enough name. Well, Thomas Brown's father was a clerk in a bank and as such came to know a few of the big people in Calcutta. The bank had been doing very badly for some years and a few of the more knowing employes were suspicious and old Brown by some means, very probably unfair means, came to know that the Bank would probably close its doors in a fortnight. He thought he'd make a good job of this and went to one of the richest merchants of the town who had several lakhs of rupees in the Bank and gave him the tip. Of course the merchant was eternally grateful to Brown. He gave him five thousand rupees at the time and told him that if ever he required assistance to come to him again. Old Brown spent almost all this money in educating his son, Thomas Brown, in England and then, through the influence of his everlastingly grateful and influential merchant

friend, he obtained for him a superior appointment. Thomas Brown is now getting about eight or nine hundred rupees, but he'll never get any more because, being a Eurasian, he's an ass. He actually paints his face and dyes his hair, not black but dark brown, and tries to pass off as a swarthy Londoner. When he began life he was a Eurasian but he has since become a European. Of course everybody gives him the boot, even his own class."

Hathaway laughed, he knew whom McCarthy was referring to.

"Now for case No. two," said McCarthy, "you must know Alderton who comes to the Club. Appears a decent fellow doesn't he? but he's a damned Eurasian also. This is how I came to know about it. Bloomfield, that fellow with the face like a pumpkin, quite a good sort of chap no doubt, but one can't stick his face, told me that Alderton's brother is working under him as a store clerk. He called up the store clerk one day and after questioning whether Alderton was his brother, asked him what his nationality was, and what do you think he replied? Well here's his own words as reported by Bloomfield.—My brother Robert whom you know, Sir, and who has the least brains of all of us, but who has got on the best, calls himself a European. My second brother Sir, he's very clever and he is a Deputy Magistrate and Collector and is pretty brown coloured, calls himself an Anglo Indian, and I, Sir, I look

at my skin and I ses, I am a Eurasian. I cannot say what my family is, Sir, with these three mixtures and because my brother Robert ses he's got no relatives in India."

Hathaway laughed again.

"Do you know I'm going to cut him dead the next time I see him," said McCarthy.

"Do as you please old chap." Hathaway replied.

"And now," cried McCarthy, "what do you think of the country born or the Eurasian as we should of course call him?"

"I think jolly well of them. Now, how many cases like Thomas Browns and Aldertons have you seen or heard of."

"My dear fellow, you are a pure European. Can't you deal with things in a broad and administrative way. Why descend into details like the Babu who could never look at things in any other way. These fellows Wilkinson and Wensley, middle class or low class fellows, that's what they are, have contaminated you. You'll soon be a laughing stock at the club."

"I think you better get away McCarthy, you don't know what you are talking about. It won't be long before you are a laughing stock unless you mend. Do you fancy every Indian is like the office babu whom you pay twenty or twentyfive to do work worth fifty. You know nothing. You possibly have never come into close contact with the educated

Indian. He knows as well as any one else how to administer and how to be broad minded. If he at times descends into details it is because he knows the details and is not afraid of getting at them. You would probably make a fool of yourself if you attempted it, but you have no right on that account to speak of Indians as not being able to look at things in a proper way. And again why should you say that Wilkinson and Wensley belong to the middle class or the low class? It's just the same with their community as it is with your nation and mine. There are those who belong to the upper class, the middle class and the lowest class. Wilkinson is as much of the first class as you or I. He lives where we live, he keeps as good a house as I do or even better, and he's got the best of manners. I can take you over any time. And Wensley why he's spending his leave now in the Continent. But after all, I don't know that the chief thing is to what class a man belongs. To my mind the chief thing is whether a man is a gentleman or not. And, if ever there were gentlemen, Wilkinson and Wensly are, and I know a good many others of their community who are quite fit to belong to the best class of any society and who will hold their own anywhere. You speak with unwarrantable prejudice McCarthy. But the day for prejudices is about done. The country born man has suffered in the past, he's been found wanting in some respects but this has been entirely

due to the difficulty of his position, to misunderstandings, and to his unhappy environments, but he's going to get on. I have, and I know most of us Europeans who have been some time out in the country have, a good opinion of them. I almost wish some great crisis would occur in which they could show that after all they've got grit, courage and backbone and that they are capable of tackling anything. For my part I believe, after I have seen what stuff Wilkinson and Wensley and a few others are made of that there is no honest job that it is too small for them to do or too big for them to tackle. Of course the cases of Thomas Brown and Alderton are disgraceful ones. Its just these chaps that do themselves and the community to which they belong, a world of harm. You bet I'll give Alderton the cold shoulder the next time I see him."

"You've been badly influenced Hathaway. I wouldn't have thought it of you. I'm having a very slack day to-day so I'll get along and tell a few others of my pals these stories, and I won't forget to tell them about your views. What shall I call them, humanitarian or Christian views?"

"Do get out of this McCarthy. If you have no work, I have."

"Cheer oh, old fellow. Meet you at the Club to-night."

For fully ten minutes Hathaway paced up and down his room in deep contemplation. "It's just these sort of short sighted uncharitably disposed youngsters that do all the injury. My word he talks of cutting others dead, I'll see that he's cut dead unless he pulls up," and with disgust he flung the stump of his cigar on the floor.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### Reconciliation.

Malcolm and Martha returned to Calcutta in November of the following year. Martha was a confirmed invalid. Malcolm spent most of his leisure hours in reading to her. There was yet a feeling of restraint between them which prevented free and easy conversation, but she was very grateful to him for the attention he paid to her and she invariably brightened up considerably when he came into her room. A skilful doctor was in regular attendance. He gave Malcolm no hopes. All that he was able to say was that with care Martha might be kept alive for another year. Early in March the following year she began to grow worse rapidly and the doctor warned Malcolm that the end was near.

On the morning of the 12th April, Malcolm noticed while reading the "Statesman" an *Immemorial* notice of the death of Miss Chatterton which had occurred nine years ago. This brought back to his mind the last conversation he had with his late friend, Musgrave, and the packet Musgrave had left with him. Malcolm had carefully preserved it. When he got home from work in the evening he hastened to his study, took out the packet, tore open the envelope and read the contents. It ran thus: —

My darling,

I cannot marry you because I was entrapped by a fiendish brute before I met you. I had heard he had died and it was because of this that I consented to marry you, but I saw him this morning and he grinned so at me that I knew I was yet in his hands. I cannot bear the thought so I have decided to take my life. When nine years have past, if you and he are still alive, take your revenge on him in whatever way you think best. He is a creature that is not fit to live. This is the truth. I cannot say more. His name is William Eagle. That you may identify him I enclose his photograph.

Your loving girl.

Malcolm turned from the letter to the photo. It gave him a start. The photograph was of the man Waterloo he had met in the train journey.

He returned the letter and photo to its cover and placed the latter in the drawer and he resolved to find out more about Crow. After making several futile attempts he decided to seek assistance. Once again he applied to his friend, Doctor Matesky. After he had told the doctor all he knew, and what he wanted to know, the Doctor smiled.

"Are you also on his track?" he enquired. "The man is a rotter, there is no doubt about it. He belongs to the Watter Club. I know a

few friends who belong to the same club. I'll find out all I can about him."

At the end of a fortnight Dr. Matesky called to see Malcolm.

"I have found out a great deal Wensley? I pity his wife, Wensley; from all accounts the blackguard is running a second establishment. His morals are very loose and I have ascertained on good authority that he is the cad that deceived Miss Chatterton which led to her tragic death. Whether his name was then Waterloo or Crow or arch devil I have been unable to ascertain. He is of mixed descent. His father was a German Count and his mother an Austrian woman. He is commonly known as the man who whistles after women. But tell me Wensley why are you interested?"

Malcolm hesitated before replying. "Doctor, Mrs. Crow is an old friend of ours."

"But I hope you are not thinking of interfering, Wensley. Interference in these matters generally makes bad, worse. By the way, has Mrs. Crow any children?"

"None," Malcolm replied.

"That's good That's good. I hope she will never have any. But to return to my point, you don't intend to interfere, do you? Follow my advice. However much you and your wife may feel for your friend, it's not a case in which you should interfere."

"If there was no law I would kill the fellow Doctor. He has no right to live. He has to my knowledge ruined two lives already. Miss Chatterton's and my friend, Musgraves, but for him they would both be amongst us to-day, probably living happy and useful lives. He is undoubtedly spoiling another fine life. She was a good girl Doctor. A really good girl. She is so good that she will never complain of her lot. The coward must be taking advantage of her good and submissive nature and bullying, neglecting and ill-treating her. Yes, I know her nature very well Doctor, she used to spend her holidays with us. I feel more sorry for her than I can express. But we are living in a practical world, or as I often call it an impractical world, and one cannot slay another, however justifiable the action, without hanging for it oneself. And short of killing him I cannot see that any useful purpose will be served, for I am concerned principally with releasing his wife from his grip. Ah! his grip over her, poor child! must be like the grip of an Octopus."

"Wensley," the Doctor interrupted, "what is the matter with you? I have never heard you speak like this before. But you are a good sort and as you say I have no doubt that you feel very much for your friend."

Malcolm was about to burst out that he loved Gwendolyn. Indeed that he loved her more dearly than his own life, but he controlled himself.

The Doctor rose to go. As they shook hands Malcolm thanked the doctor for his help and advice and promised him that he would not do anything rash. In fact that he would not take any definite step in the matter without first consulting him.

Another week passed. During this week Malcolm constantly prayed for Gwendolyn. He prayed that she may have peace of mind and that she would be kept from harm and he felt that if his faith was weak nevertheless his prayers would be heard as Gwendolyn must be offering up the same prayer herself. He remembered how often she had told him how firmly she believed in the power of prayer. This thought comforted him a little, but he was not unnaturally anxious to find out exactly how she was situated. He hesitated to make any enquiries of her from Martha. It was impossible for him to try and see Gwendolyn. He had asked her to avoid him, indeed he had almost commanded her not to see him. He had told her that he would never like to see her again. She was not a vain or conceited woman, but she had proper pride and she understood his feelings. She would very properly refuse to see him if he called on her, especially if he did so when her husband was not at home. He did not want to go out of his way to get a snub. What then was he to do? He knew no one who would be able to find out from Gwen how she was placed and he realised that most people would laugh at

him if he asked them to get him the information he required.

One Sunday evening, shortly afterwards, when he was on his way to Chapel, a cooly ran up to him and handed him a note. His heart gave a leap. The address was in Gwendolyn's handwriting. "Whatever could it mean?" he said, as he tore open the cover in feverish haste.

"I must see you," she wrote. "I must see you immediately. I am in the carriage at the end of the street. If you turn back I shall understand that you consent and I shall follow you. Go into your study and I shall come there. Don't refuse me; for the love that you once had for me, Don't!"

He paid the messenger and retraced his steps home. He went into his study, left the door ajar and sat down at the head of the table. Before doing so, however, he placed a comfortable chair for Gwendolyn at the side of the table. In a few seconds the door was pushed open gently and Gwendolyn entered.

He nearly went mad when he saw her. All her beauty appeared to him to have vanished. She looked quite a common woman. The refinement of her features, of her movements, and of the shape of her body, were no longer there. She was even dressed coarsely. She, who used to be so exceedingly careful of her toilet and who, although she never wore anything expensive or gaudy, always looked to him the

best dressed woman in the world ! But this was not all. Her very voice was jarry and her attitude vulgar. How different she was from the girl whose sweet tone enchanted every one she spoke to and whose graceful carriage was the admiration of all who saw her.

“ Have you no welcome for me, Malcolm ? ” she began.

“ My poor child ! My poor child ! ” he moaned. “ It is not that I have no welcome for you. I was so taken aback at the change in you, that I could not speak. Where is your bright and happy face ? Where is your sweet and enchanting voice ? Have they left you for good ? Sit down my girl, sit down and tell me all you have to say. Don’t keep anything from me. I yet love you and you are wrong in referring to the love I once had for you. It might have changed but it has been more and more refined. It is not one bit less than it was two and a half years ago. Stay, let me bolt the door, and then you can speak without fear of being interrupted.”

He bolted the door, resumed his seat and invited her again to sit down.

“ No, Malcolm,” she said “ I prefer to stand. I feel I can speak better, standing. Malcolm, I shall tell you all, I must tell you all. You are the only one in this world that I can bring my troubles to. I have tried to be brave and to bear them myself, Malcolm, and I have done so for all this time. For two and a half years,

but I can do so no longer, Malcolm. After what happened last night, I can't. I simply can't. My God! My God!, how severely I am being punished."

He took her right hand in his and first kissed it and then gently stroked it.

"Compose yourself, Gwendolyn," he said, "don't get excited and don't hurry. I must hear all you have to say."

"Very well, Malcolm, I will tell you all. I came here to tell you all. You were always so good to me. You were always so good to everyone who came in contact with you, that I knew you would not turn me away notwithstanding the way I treated you, and your express wish that I should not see you again."

"Everything has gone wrong Malcolm. Everything has gone wrong from the moment you left me that day in Bombay. I was on the point of yielding to your wish and telling you the truth, and when I think of it now I am sure I would have done so if you had taken me into your arms and kissed me as I asked you to. *That* would have effected the change in me that nothing else could. *That* would have brought me back to my senses and broke down the foolish and stubborn attitude I assumed. But I am not come here to reproach you, Malcolm. I have not come to shift a portion of the blame for all that has happened on to you. I, and I alone, am responsible for all that has occurred. I have ruined my life and I



know I have taken out of yours all the little happiness you enjoyed when we were sweet-hearts."

He interrupted her quickly. "It was not little happiness Gwendolyn. It was very, very much. The memory of it is still a sacred thing to me. It fills my heart to the brim. It still gives me happiness but of course in a different way : I may be wrong in loving you. I a married man and you the wife of another, but I can't help it. As I said before I love you yet and love you more than I ever did before. But go on with your story, child."

"Malcolm, I must begin at the beginning. You remember Malcolm that often you advised me to consult a good and trustworthy person about the relationship we stood to one another. You would often say that both of us being in love with one another, and love being blind, we might be acting contrary to our best interest and welfare and, that although you did not think so, our conduct might be wicked. Whenever you urged me to do this, you more than pointedly suggested that I should consult Miss McGuire. You only saw her once but from what I told you of her you always spoke of her as a very intelligent girl with all the properties of a true friend. And she was all that, and more Malcolm. She admired you a great deal Malcolm so much that considering you were in her company for only half an hour I actually felt a bit jealous,

Malcolm. I had often thought of following your advice and consulting her, but after that I couldn't. In fact a little coldness sprang up between us. Instead of being proud that she was so soon convinced of your goodness I became, as I said, jealous, but only very little Malcolm. It was not in me to be of a jealous nature. You see, you also spoke so highly of her even before seeing her that I was a bit afraid of losing you. It was wrong of me, I know it was. You were too good and true to be unfaithful to me and Agnes was too straight to fall in love with a married man."

Here she checked herself and Malcolm knew why. "Go on Gwendolyn I know you are a straight girl, as straight as a die."

"Added to my absurd feeling of jealousy it was the five years' agreement, Malcolm, that was the cause of all our troubles. As the end of the term began to approach I felt strangely uneasy and fearful and, Malcolm, forgive me, but sometimes I felt unkindly disposed towards you for having exacted such a promise from me. But it was only for brief intervals Malcolm. I loved you too much to even think ill of you. I knew if I spoke, you would relinquish all claim to the fulfilment of the promise and that it would not have made any change in your love for me, but I remembered that you had waited for five years, Malcolm. The scene in your room the day before I made you the promise was ever fresh in my mind, and I

recognised, perhaps wrongly, that the disappointment would be too cruel for you to bear. But that was not all, I feared that you would think little of me for having kept you attached to me for all those years and then to have broken faith with you. Every night I lay awake and considered the matter carefully in all its bearings; every morning I was still undecided. I did this for a full week. At the end of the week the idea struck me to follow the advice you so often gave me. I would see Miss McGuire and tell her all and follow her advice. I saw her, I told her everything except that you were the person I loved. What did it matter who the person was, I reflected. It was quite natural that I should withhold the name of the man. She seemed to quite understand the position and never once asked me who the man was. Wasn't it quite natural, Malcolm, for me to keep back the man's name?"

"Yes," he said "I think you did right. It would not have affected the case, because in a matter like this a fair and impartial judgment can only be arrived at by excluding the personal element. You were quite right in this respect and you were quite right in referring to Miss McGuire. I am sure she gave you wholesome and disinterested advice."

"Malcolm, when I had related all, she told me most definitely that I must give you up, that my conduct had all along been very reprehensible. I begged of her to reconsider

the matter, to remember that I loved you with all my life, that I would give up anything, except God, to please and comfort you. But she was very firm Malcolm, she would not budge an inch, and she went on to say that she thought there was only one way of my setting myself really free of the unhappy alliance I had formed. She advised me vehemently to get married soon. She told me to get married to the first man who asked me and she prophesied a great and happy future for me. She spoke very forcibly, Malcolm, and much against my inclinations I yielded to her advice."

"Within a week I met Mr. Crow. He seemed to be attracted to me and sought my company. He invited me to go out with him and I accepted his invitation. He seemed so nice then. I liked him and I liked him especially because he was so religious. The third time I went out with him he asked me to marry him and thinking of all that Agnes told me, I consented."

"Stop Gwendolyn." Malcolm broke in, "Am I to understand that you did not love this man before you married him, before you consented to be his wife.? Did you speak an untruth when you told me that you loved him.?"

"Malcolm I did not tell you that I loved him. I couldn't tell you a deliberate lie, Malcolm, but I know I led you to believe that I

did love him, I could not help it, Malcolm, you pressed me so, but I resolved, Malcolm, that after I became his wife I would try and learn to love him, and that is one of the reasons which moved me to act as I did. But it was all wrong Malcolm. I see now that it was all wrong."

"You cannot imagine, Malcolm, what a miserable life my married life has been. The night of our marriage William was quite drunk and he behaved so cruelly and rudely to me, and he kept on drinking more and more. Because I spoke to him, and believe me, Malcolm, I spoke very kindly and asked him to stop drinking, he struck me. I had resolved, as I said, to learn to love him; how was I to do so after this incident? But I tried to be brave, Malcolm. I had taken him for better or worse, I was determined to bear my cross. I was determined to treat him so considerately and kindly and I hoped that as time went on he would treat me better. He was always cruel to me; before a week had passed he beat me with a stick. But I still kept firm to my resolve. I still did all I could to improve matters. I still hoped that he would at least give up striking me. I did all I could to serve him; I studied his wishes. I looked to his comforts. He never returned home before two or three in the mornings and he seldom left me with sufficient money to manage the house. And yet I never troubled him. I sat up every night and opened the door for him when he

tapped. He was invariably half drunk when he arrived. Instead of being thankful to me for keeping up to attend to him, he usually pushed me aside and, more often than not, questioned me rudely as to why I was awake. *Good women are always asleep at this hour he would say.* Not a week passed without his striking me. It occurred whenever I asked him for money for the house. *What the devil have you been doing with all I have given you he would say. I hear your mother is getting very fat.* Of course this hurt me more than all the beatings. Often I was tempted to run away from him. Often I thought of becoming a Roman Catholic and entering a convent as a nun. Often I have been tempted to commit suicide, but, Malcolm, one thing kept me away from doing anything rash. It was my love for you."

On hearing this Malcolm sprang to his feet. He felt like taking her into his arms and kissing her sorrows away, but she perceived his intentions and putting her hand out prevented him from coming close to her.

"No, Malcolm," she said, "don't do that. I shall not be able to go on with my story, if you do. And it would not be right."

"As I said, Malcolm, it was only my love for you that kept me from doing something rash."

Malcolm interrupted, her. "Look here Gwen," he said, "I don't disbelieve that you love me or that you have loved me all along,

but it was not that, Gwen, that kept you in safety. It was your great and simple faith in God. I know it was that."

"For a time Malcolm, yes, but not later on, no. Since my marriage I have never been to Church. William would not allow me. But for a whole year I was steadfast and I prayed every day more fervently than ever, but my prayers were not answered. As I said before things went from bad to worse. At the end of a year I began to doubt the power of prayer and within a month or two I even lost my faith in God."

"Stop Gwen," he cried, "this is too serious, surely you don't mean to say that you have given up praying and that you do not believe in God."

"It is so, Malcolm. I cannot lie to you. I do not forget Malcolm that you are of the same mind as myself. You told me so, didn't you?"

"Yes, yes, I did, but that was five years ago, Gwendolyn. I was then passing through the sea of doubt. But I was drawn back to God by you. I am now more than ever convinced of the existence of God and all my old faith has come back to me. Never again will I doubt. No temptation or trial will affect me in that way again. But I never thought you would fall away, Gwen. The period of doubt comes at least once in every person's life. You are now in this period. Learn from me who has already been through it, Gwen. Follow my advice. Now and here dispel your doubts."

"No, Malcolm. Even if there is a God everything is written here" and she pointed to her forehead. What has to happen, must happen. Everything is written down the day before we are born."

"Not at all, Gwendolyn. If you believe that is true, then we can commit every conceivable sin and put the blame on God, because it had to happen because it was written down. What makes you say this Gwen.?"

"Because Malcolm my prayers have not been answered. I saw the Minister about the matter. At first he told me to have patience and that God would surely answer my prayers but when they were not answered he told me that it was not for my good, that is why they were not answered. Really Malcolm there is no understanding these matters."

"Don't let this shake your belief in God, Gwendolyn. As I told you once before, God is unchangeable, He has laid down unchangeable laws, the violation of which involve certain penalties. All men are judged by these laws. Therefore in a way each man can judge himself. There is no saying more true than, *Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap*. Come back to God, Gwendolyn."

"Malcolm, when I am with you, every thing is different, the whole world is different. Why couldn't I speak and tell you why I resolved to marry, William."



"You would never have married him if you did," he said, "because I had long before decided not to exact the fulfilment of your promise. It was wrong, it was wicked, and I was not going to spoil your pure and innocent life."

"Oh, how cruel you are Malcolm. Why didn't you tell me so."

"I came prepared to tell you Gwendolyn, but you never gave me the chance. You will recollect that we promised one another not to speak of the affair until the period of five years was over. It was a promise you made me give you. But I came prepared to break it and would have done so if you had not told me that you considered a person who broke a promise a despicable being."

"Malcolm, Malcolm," she cried, "is this true, is this true. What have we not lost Malcolm by misunderstanding one another? We who always used to pride ourselves in understanding one another thoroughly. What a severe fall our pride has had."

"A week ago Malcolm, Miss McGuire came to Calcutta. She came on some business for only a couple of days. Without informing me she drove to our place and insisted on staying with me. I was only too glad to have her but I feared she would discover my unhappiness. I did not wish her to."

"That very night William thrashed me. I

hoped that Agnes was not awake when it happened, but she was, and the next morning, after breakfast, she questioned me about it when we were alone. I did not wish to tell her anything but she is a clever girl and gradually by careful and patient questioning she got everything out of me."

"I am so sorry dear, she said, I am in a way responsible for all this. I should not have advised you to marry a man unless you loved him. And then she asked me who it was that I had loved. Without considering what I was about I told her it was you. She got up from her chair in a rage and spoke very angrily to me. She accused me of deceiving her, of purposely withholding your name from jealous motives. I could see it all now, Gwendolyn she said. After that night when I told you I liked him you were a bit cold to me, but I never suspected the reason. Shame on you, Gwendolyn, shame. You deceived me. You did yourself a great injury but what is of most concern you must have wrecked his happiness. Had you told me it was he, my advice to you would have been quite different. I thought the man you referred to was a scheming person. And there are so many of them about in this world who take advantage of innocent and inexperienced girls and it was for this I tried to save you, but he was, and is, I am sure, not a man like that. I would have told you to go to him and tell him that you could never consent to be more to him and I

am sure he would have acted as only a good man could. Indeed I feel that he acted under the impulse of temptation in exacting that horrible promise from you and that before he left Bombay he changed his mind about it. I do hope that some day you will find out the truth."

"And then she sat down Malcolm, and her haughtiness appeared to pass away. She drew a chair up nearer to mine and looking me kindly into the face said, Gwendolyn dear don't be angry with me for all I said just now. I was moved by my love for you and my admiration for him and I regretted that my advice should have spoiled both your lives. But I shall give you another piece of advice, Gwendolyn. You cannot continue to bear this great sorrow of yours without some comfort and good counsel. Be brave and bear up, but if ever you feel desperate, if ever you need a support, go to him. You will not go in vain."

"Malcolm her words burnt into my brain that is why I have been able to repeat them like this and Malcolm she admits that she likes and admires you. I almost think she loves you. In her own sweet way of course. I mean nothing wrong, Malcolm. One can love a friend, can't one Malcolm, even though of the opposite sex?"

Malcolm made no reply.

"But it was not only her advice, Malcolm, that has made me come here. It was what

happened last night. William invited some ladies and gentlemen over for dinner. He told me that they were great and intimate friends of his and that I was to make myself specially agreeable. I reminded him in a quiet way that I was always agreeable to his friends. That's all right he said, but to-night you must be specially agreeable and you must look your best. Dress as well as you can and make yourself look fetching. Try and appear as you did the first time I met you. You were a pretty girl then, but since our marriage you look a ghost. Is there any wonder I have to strike you. I promised to do as he wished, Malcolm."

"The dinner was a very sumptuous one and the seven of them drank plentifully. Early in the dinner I noticed that they were too friendly with one another. The ladies were actually pinching the men next to them and the men in their turn were placing their arms round the ladies' waists. William was the worst behaved. He drank the most and we were scarcely half through dinner when he leaned over and kissed the lady on his right. Her husband was sitting next to me. Malcolm, forgive me, but I do not think they were husbands and wives. I expected him to be annoyed and I feared a quarrel. He was a big and powerful man and appeared to be of a violent temper. Instead of questioning William he laughed out merrily. What a sensible fellow you are, he said. You are

always, so obliging. Ever since I came here I have been admiring your pretty wife. I am half in love with her already. I only wanted an excuse to kiss her and you have given me one, and before I could realise what he was about, he leaned over and put his large and heavy arms round my neck. I quickly disengaged myself and stood up. William, I said, this man's conduct is outrageous. Get up, William, and protect me. He looked up to me and grinned and then he said, Don't make a fuss. He is a good fellow and as we belong to the same country we have agreed to exchange wives. I told you, you were to be very, very, agreeable to-day, didn't I, and you promised, so sit down at once unless you want to be thrashed and if you find the seat uncomfortable sit on his lap. We'll all follow suit if you give the lead. At this suggestion of his, there was a burst of laughter. And the other gentlemen said Capital, Mr. Crow. And one of them I heard distinctly called him Waterloo instead of Crow."

Malcolm jumped to his feet. Gwendolyn put her hands out. "Please sit down Malcolm and hear me. There is very little more for me to say. I told William, I should only remain to dinner on condition I was treated with the respect due to a lady. At this, one of the other men who had stolen behind me unobserved, put his hands round my neck and kissed me. I turned on him and gave him a push. The

weak half drunken creature, I believe he was an Austrian, lost his balance and fell against the table which came down with a crash. There was a general commotion and William, who had left for a minute, returned with his riding whip. He lashed me across the face and body three or four times and called me a disagreeable devil and said that he had a good mind to punish me by locking me up, in a room alone with the man who had first insulted me, and again he lashed the whip across me."

"Did none of the gentlemen interfere?" Malcolm enquired.

"Are they gentlemen Malcolm? Oh Malcolm you can't imagine what a rude and wicked man William is! Only once he spoke of you, but I can never forgive him for what he said." "Stop, what did he say Gwendolyn?"

"Malcolm it is better if you didn't hear it. It is so cruel."

"You shall tell me Gwendolyn, Now what was it?"

"Malcolm he spoke of you with contempt and repulsion as that black man, and he said that no black man is fit to live with a white person until he was bled white. Oh Malcolm see there I have hurt you too much. I should not have told you."

"Go on with your story, Gwendolyn."

"To my good luck, he addressed them next. Come my friends, he said, let us go to the

grill room and have a few more drinks and something to eat. We will leave this disagreeable creature to heal her wounds, but I promise you to subdue her in less than a month and I'll invite you again to witness my success and you, old fellow, can have all you want. I'll count the days for the month said the fat fool."

"No sooner had they left than I packed up a few things, including the jewellery mother and you gave me, and I went to the Sealdah station waiting room. I spent the night there and all this morning I have been moving about from one place to another to avoid detection by William. This is my story, Malcolm. I have come to you because of the love we once had for one another and because I have never ceased to love you. I am quite inexperienced, Malcolm. I do not know the ways of the world. Can he compel me to go back to him. Tell me Malcolm. If he can I'll kill myself. Believe me, Malcolm, I will."

"My poor child. My poor child," he said, "I should have been prepared to suffer anything than see you in this plight. I told you before you married what I would do to anyone who dared to ill-treat and insult you. To night, I shall murder him. He shall not live to see the light of another day."

"No Malcolm, no," she entreated and she approached him. "If you say you'll do that, I'll go back to him at once."

"You shall not," he cried. "If you speak the truth, when you say you love me and have never ceased to love me, you will obey me. You must get away to-night to Patna. You must go to Martha's uncle, Dr. Clay. Go on a pretext of obtaining medical advice from him. In the meantime I shall think over your case, and if necessary take legal advice and I shall write to you how to act. It would not be wise for you to stay here or even in Calcutta until something definite is decided. You must go. You must not travel by the Mail train. He may have it watched. Take a carriage and go to Lillooah and go into the first passenger train moving northwards and change into a fast train somewhere higher up the line. I would go with you but there is very little time. I must think and act."

"I shan't go unless you promise me you will not stain your hands with his filthy blood Malcolm."

"We have had enough of troubles on account of promises, Gwendolyn. I will not make another. Again I say if you love me you will leave at once, for there is very little time, and act as I suggest. Leave me to work out your salvation. I shall not do anything that is unnecessary."

"There is just one point, Malcolm. You spoke of taking legal advice. Will you require my marriage certificate? I have not got it Malcolm: William destroyed it the night of



our wedding : Shortly after he struck me and I pleaded with him to be kind to me, as he had promised, he told me in reply that he never kept any promises or agreements unless it suited him to do so : Immediately after saying this he went into my room and brought the marriage certificate in his hand : Watch me he said as he tore it into scraps and threw the pieces through the window, this is what I do with any agreement that does not suit me." "Don't trouble about that," Malcolm rejoined, "I can always get another copy if necessary."

She looked up pleadingly to him. "Kiss me Malcolm," she said, "and I'll be gone and I'll do as you command me, now and forever."

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### Sentenced to death.

Gwendolyn had hardly left when Malcolm put on his hat and walked out into the open. He felt he needed to think and he knew from experience that he would be able to think more clearly if he walked. This was a habit of his whenever he was deep in thought. His feelings at the time were homicidal but he was fully aware of the gravity of the offence of murder and he did not want to take any step without careful consideration. Without knowing it he was going in the direction of Dr. Matesky's house. He only realised this as he neared the house, and immediately he was reminded of his promise to do nothing in connection with Crow until he had seen the Doctor and heard what he had to say. He hesitated, however, to approach Dr. Matesky, because he felt convinced that if he was to ask the Doctor for his advice he would of necessity have to tell him of his relationship with Gwendolyn. He would surely have avoided the Doctor if it were not that he placed a high value on the fulfilment of a promise. When, at length, he reached the Doctor's house he felt strangely moved to go in and take the Doctor into his confidence. Moved by this strange feeling he climbed up the stairs and knocked violently at the door, which was instantly opened

by Mrs. Matesky. She invited Malcolm to come in, but in the same breath mentioned that the Doctor had just been called to attend to an urgent case in Harrison Road, in which he would have to perform an operation, and that consequently he could not possibly return for an hour or so. Malcolm asked to be excused from going in and promised to call again the next day.

After leaving the Doctor's place he walked about aimlessly, for how long he did not know. His power of reasoning seemed to have left him for the time being. When he came back to himself he drew out his watch and looked at the time. It was ten minutes to eleven. This was very late for him to be out ; latterly he was always at home before nine. He therefore hurried back in hot haste. As he pushed open the gate leading to his house two men moved up to him. The shorter of the two, whom Malcolm recognised as Inspector Cachart, laid his hand on Malcolm's shoulder and addressed him thus :—

“Malcolm Wensley, I arrest you for the murder of William Crow. Any thing you may say will be used in evidence against you.”

“All I have to say is that you are making a fool of yourself Inspector Cachart,” Malcolm retorted, “I have no objection to your using this statement in evidence against me or for the matter of that against yourself.”

"This is no time for silly jokes," the Inspector rejoined, and as he spoke he clapped a pair of handcuffs on Malcolm.

"I am very sorry indeed to do this, Mr. Wensley," he remarked, "but orders must be obeyed. If you remain quiet we will take you away without attracting attention. Get a closed carriage, McArthur," he said, turning to the other man.

When Malcolm was arrested his first thought was of Gwendolyn. The fact that she was now a free woman comforted him not a little. He felt sure that the mistake made in arresting him would soon be put right and that he would be released in the morning. He was therefore quite calm and collected. When the usual questions were put to him at the police station his frank answers and apparent straight-forwardness made all present marvel. He was put into a dingy room for the night and his bed was a hard bench about six feet long and a foot and a half broad, but he was tired and any bed was good enough for him. He stretched himself out and was soon fast asleep. When he awoke it was already dawn. He dusted his clothes and rubbed his hair down and sitting on the bench began to reflect on the events of the previous day. His chief concern was of Gwendolyn. Had she got safely away or had she, and he trembled from head to foot at some of the ideas that were suggesting

themselves to him, anything to do with the murder of Crow? If she didn't murder him; who did? Did his threat to do so unhinge the poor girl's reason and drive her to commit the deed.? If it did, the law, although it might be put into motion against him on different premises, would be right in punishing him as the real offender.

These reflections created a yearning within him to know immediately the facts connected with Crow's death and the evidence on which he had been arrested, and he made a mental resolution that if he was convinced that the deed could have been committed by no other person than Gwendolyn, he would plead guilty and suffer in her stead. Oh, how he longed to see her in private, if only for a few minutes and ascertain the truth from her lips, but he knew that this was impossible. She would break down if she saw him in this pitiful condition and she might say things she should not. No, even if she came to see him she must be refused admission. He felt utterly lonely and he longed to have some one to confide in. He prayed that some kind, considerate person would come to see him, some one whom he would be able to charge with the duty of finding out the truth. And, as if in answer to his prayer, the door of his cell was unlocked and a policeman admitted Dr. Matesky.

The Doctor came up to Malcolm and took both of his hands into his. They then sat down side by side on the hard bench.

"My dear boy," the Doctor began, "I read of your arrest only ten minutes ago. I know the Deputy Commissioner of Police very well. I rang him up on the telephone and he gave me permission to see you. Now tell me quickly all there is to say. What really happened yesterday? Why did you call to see me? Remember I am your friend. I cannot believe you are guilty of this offence. Indeed I know you are not, but the accounts of the case in the papers seem very black against you," and he drew out a cutting from a leading local newspaper and handed it to Malcolm.

It mentioned that the resident of the house next to Mr. Crow's, hearing the report of a pistol hurried into Mr. Crow's place and discovered the dead body of Mr. Crow lying in a pool of blood in his dressing room. A six chambered revolver lay close by. He ran out as quickly as he entered and gave intimation of his discovery at the nearest police station. Inspector Cachart and Serjeant McArthur proceeded to the scene of the occurrence and after examining the body to satisfy themselves that life was extinct, and taking necessary precautions to prevent the disturbance of anything in the room, commenced and carried on their enquiries with exemplary skill and expedition. The servants of the house, on being questioned, stated that a violent quarrel had taken place the previous day between Mr. and Mrs. Crow. That Mr. Crow had struck his wife in the presence of several

friends who had been invited to dinner, and had subsequently left the house in their company. They also deposed to the fact that the deceased had habitually ill-treated his wife, often beating her with a whip in their presence. It would appear that shortly after his departure Mrs. Crow also left the house. Where she went to immediately is not yet known, but on the following evening one of the servants saw her entering the house of Mr. Wensley. Finding that no other useful information could be obtained from this quarter the Inspector proceeded immediately to Mr. Wensley's. He was not at home. The Inspector asked permission and was allowed to see Mrs. Wensley. The latter explained that her husband had, as usual, gone to Chapel in the evening; probably he had met some friend and was detained; she expected him back at any moment; he was not in the habit of staying out late. Asked if she knew where Mrs. Crow was she stated she had not seen her for over a month. The Inspector next questioned the servants, only one of them was able to throw any light on the enquiry. She said that she saw Mrs. Crow go into the study and remain in there for more than an hour. Effort was made to connect the revolver with the crime and here the Inspector met with signal success. It was past nine when he called on the head of one of the business houses and applied for information. The gentleman went to his shop without any avoidable delay and to the satis-

faction of the Inspector it was traced that the revolver had recently been sold to Mr. Wensley. Information was at once sent to all Police Stations and Platform Police to watch for Wensley, but Inspector Cachart working on his own methods watched the house. At midnight Wensley pushed the street gate open and was immediately arrested. Up to the time of going to Press no clue had been obtained of the whereabouts of Mrs. Crow.

Malcolm read the Article twice over and then turned to the Doctor. "This is a true account, Doctor, except that I cannot understand how my pistol came to be found there, and, as you say, the case against me looks very black, but what of that? If the police were so clever as to ascertain all they did in the course of an hour, surely they have been clever enough to find the culprit by now."

The Doctor gripped Malcolm's hand fiercely. "Ah, what a relief this is to me," he said, "I knew you were not guilty, Wensley. Now don't be alarmed at what I am about to tell you. The police are a set of fools, they work only on the obvious, forgetting that the obvious is always avoided and obscured by a clever criminal. They will not devote any more time in investigating the crime. They are cocksure they have found the murderer and all their energies will now be directed in weaving a net of evidence round you in order to obtain a conviction. The



police are not concerned with justice but with convictions."

"I am afraid you are wrong, Doctor," Malcolm replied, "what you say may perhaps apply to some of the subordinates, but surely a case like this comes under notice of the higher officials, and most of them are astute gentlemen. What of their responsibilities.?"

"It is not wise for us to discuss this matter here, Wensley. The policeman standing yonder is expected to be within ear-shot. If he does not like our conversation he will call out, 'Time's up, Sir.' Surely you are able to prove an alibi. You called at my place at half past seven, that can be proved; the murder is said to have been committed at about eight, can you not explain your movements for this brief half hour? Did you not meet some one you know after you left Mrs. Matesky? Where did you go to?"

"Let me think," said Malcolm. "Yes, there I have it. I walked on the Chowringhee payment from Bristol corner to the Cathedral. I then sat on one of the benches on the maidan on the west of the Cathedral. How long I sat there I don't exactly know, but when I took out my watch and looked at the time it was ten minutes to eleven. I am afraid no one who knows me saw me, Doctor. I did not notice any one. Is it possible to advertise?"

"Wensley, excuse my asking you, but have

you thought of how you are going to defend yourself, and whom you are going to employ?"

"I shall conduct my own defence, Doctor. An innocent man does not need to pay a lawyer and, there is a further difficulty, I have not the means to engage a good man. A tin-pot lawyer would only play into the hands of the prosecution."

"If you have not the means at present," and the Doctor laid emphasis on the last two words, "the means must be found Wensley. I am your friend. I look upon you as one of my boys. You must allow me to advance the money for your defence. The question of repayment can be settled later."

"It is impossible Doctor, I am already considerably involved. Now that this misfortune has befallen me, my creditors will, I fear, apply the closure. If they do I shall be ruined as my firm will not like the idea of continuing to keep me in a responsible appointment when they know I am heavily in debt."

"How much do you owe, Wensley?"

"About four thousand," Malcolm replied.

The Doctor looked at Malcolm for a long time as if he could hardly realize that he had heard him correctly.

"This is very serious," he remarked, "am I to understand that you have made no provision for your wife, Wensley, in the event of your death?"

"I have Doctor, I have taken out life policies aggregating thirty thousand rupees. It was the only way in which I could save."

"That's better, but I was not thinking of it in connection with my proposal, believe me I was not. You must let me work in this matter for you, Wensley. If you give me a list of your creditors I shall see them and arrange that they take no present action against you. But to return to what is of more importance. Is there any one you specially desire to be employed, as your counsel?"

"Doctor," said Malcolm "you are too good to me. I have heard many stories of your kindness to other people but none the less I feel that you are willing to do so much for me because you consider that I am a good fellow who deserves to be helped. Confess, Doctor, that this is so."

"It is impossible for me to deny it" he replied.

"In that case, Doctor, I am unable to accept your proffered help. I would be receiving it under false pretences. That I could never do."

"This refusal of yours makes me think all the better of you Wensley, and you must agree that the decision as to whether you are deserving of help rests with me. In order that I may come to a decision I should like to be made aware of all the relevant facts."

Malcolm knew that the Doctor, although

kind and forbearing, was very religious and never countenanced deceitful or immoral living.

"Doctor," he began, "when I called at your place last night I came with the set purpose of telling you everything about myself, and asking for your advice. Now I feel afraid to tell you. I value your friendship more than I can say and in this hour of trouble and distress, I cannot bear to face the possibility of losing it. I have only one or two friends in the whole world."

"Don't let us lose time, Wensley. It is better you tell me your story and leave me to judge for myself. Even now I cannot bring myself to consider you guilty of anything very wrong. If your lawyer and I are to help you, it is best that we should know all. Don't be afraid of me. If I have learnt nothing else all these years, I have at least learnt that every one of us has a failing and that there are one or more secrets in the life of every one of us which we would wish buried with us, but there is no secret, Wensley, that is not revealed."

Encouraged by the Doctor's kindness Malcolm told him briefly the story of his whole life, just as it is written down in this book. The Doctor listened without interrupting Malcolm even once and when Malcolm came to the end he again laid hold of Malcolm's hands.

"It is very unfortunate that you fell," he said, "but better men than you and I would

have fallen in similar circumstances. I have nothing else for you but pity, Wensley. Few men have suffered more, few men would have come out as creditably as you have in similar conditions. I will help you to the utmost. Indeed I shall try to save your life as if I was trying to save my own." And he rose to go.

Malcolm was so choked with gratitude that he was unable to speak. With tears in his eyes he grasped the Doctor's hand in both of his and kissed it. He forgot all his sufferings and he felt that a world which contained such men as Doctor Matesky was after all a good place to live in.

It is hardly necessary to describe at length all that took place at the trial. Most people who read this book will recall the sensational case.

The trial opened with an amusing incident. On the charge being read out to him, Malcolm, instead of pleading 'guilty' or 'not guilty,' appealed to the Judge in these words. "My Lord, it is all a Comedy of Errors."

"Take care," said his Lordship, "that won't do. Give a proper answer at once to the charge; but I see that you have read Shakespeare."

"A little bit, My Lord," Malcolm answered.

The evidence against Malcolm rested principally on the facts recounted in the newspaper report, all of which were proved to the hilt, and to important admissions made

by Gwendolyn in her cross-examination. With a horror at all times of telling a falsehood in face of the repeated reminders from the prosecuting counsel that she was under an oath to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and with a feeling of uneasiness and discomfort, but not of shame, in having had to admit that she was in love with Malcolm before her marriage, she was easily played upon, and in her the prosecution found its strongest ally. When asked if Malcolm threatened violence to Crow, she replied in child-like innocence, quite regardless of the consequences such a statement would have on Malcolm, "He cried out that Crow would never see the light of another day, but, My Lord, even though he said this, he could never have committed the deed."

"You are required to give your evidence and not to air your opinions Madam," retorted the rude lawyer. "Keep your opinions to yourself."

Even the judge looked at him deprecatingly.

The evening before the conclusion of the trial, Malcolm's lawyer went to see him. He explained that Doctor Matesky and he had done every thing possible to obtain a clue to the mystery but without success. The best private detectives, he explained, were busy investigating the case but not a trace could be obtained of the actual murderer.

"There seems very little hope, Wensley," he remarked, "the evidence against you is too strong for me to hold out any hope of an acquittal. The most I can do is to plead extenuating circumstances and get you off the capital punishment."

"Please do not," Malcolm begged, "and you may tell the judge and jury as from me that I ask only for justice. I am innocent and require no mercy. I have told you all the facts. I have hid nothing from you."

The court was crowded the next day. The case against Malcolm as presented by the prosecuting counsel was, that there was abundant evidence to prove that Crow had been murdered by him. His connection with the deceased's wife and his threat to kill Crow before the next morning, if not in themselves sufficient to carry a conviction, were overwhelming evidence against him when considered together with the facts that he was unable to account for his movements after half past seven in the evening, until he was arrested by the police, and that his revolver was found in the room of the dead man. All this he urged could lead to but only one conclusion and that was that Malcolm was the murderer. He stated that his desire and duty was to secure the ends of justice. He did not work for convictions. He continued to explain that inasmuch as an interval of apparently over an hour had elapsed between the time

Mrs. Crow had left Malcolm and the murder had been committed, there could be no question of grave and sudden provocation. "Indeed," he added, "but for the peculiar relationship in which these two stood, it is doubtful if the prisoner in his position as a friend of the ill-treated wife would have gone to the length that he did. The crime gentlemen," he said, "is one of those which naturally follows illegitimate relationship between man and woman."

He spoke for more than an hour but this was the gist of the address.

Malcolm's counsel made a very short speech and most people present in the court thought he had made a very poor show.

"My Lord and Gentlemen of the Jury," he said:—"The case presented to you by the prosecution appears to be so convincing that I must ask you in the interests of the accused to accept it with suspicion. Never in any case of murder, where the evidence has been entirely circumstantial, has such evidence been so apparently convincing as in the present case. Unless the prisoner in the dock was determined to kill the deceased and then pay the extreme penalty of the law it is difficult, nay it is impossible, to believe, that having in the heat of passion threatened to murder the deceased he would have acted in the manner stated in the evidence adduced by the prosecution. The prosecution would have you believe that the prisoner armed himself with his revolver and then



walked to Dr. Matesky's. Finding the doctor not at home he drove to the deceased's place and there committed the fatal deed. This is stated to have taken place at about eight at night. It is next supposed that the prisoner with a view to avoiding suspicion, kept out for three or four hours and then returned to his house in the dead of night. The very facts gentlemen that the prisoner is not only of sound mind but also pleads, not guilty, to the charge, entirely robs this evidence of all its value. No man who desired to commit such a deed and avoid detection would have gone about it in the manner suggested by the prosecution unless he was a raving lunatic, and yet you are asked to accept the evidence placed before you as overwhelmingly convincing. Yes, it is convincing and, if I may say so, I think it should convince any right-thinking man that the blow was struck, not by the accused, but by a skilled criminal who, not only removed all traces of his culpability, but left behind him evidence which has inculpated another. I am aware that in placing the case before you in this light there are weak points which I cannot satisfactorily explain. For instance, you may well ask, how comes it that the real criminal should leave traces behind him which point to a person who threatened to kill the deceased? or yet, you may not be satisfied that the prisoner's plea of, not guilty, has not occurred or been suggested to him subsequent to the perpetration of the crime. I

cannot suggest any definite explanation of the first point, one or two possible theories present themselves to me, but I cannot in any sense of fairness to others state them, but some of you may understand the direction in which my mind is travelling. As regards the second point, never has any man more firmly and consistently denied any connection with a crime for which he has been charged than the prisoner. He has made no attempt to influence the defence to set up a case which though plausible would not be true. In a perfectly straightforward manner he admits his unhappy, or as he speaks of it, his happy, connection with the deceased's wife. He asserts that beyond loving her his conduct has not in any way been open to question. He admits the truth of the interview which took place on the evening of the day of the murder and of his threat to kill the deceased before the next day, but he admits nothing more. It is unfortunate that he is not able to prove his movements between the time he left Dr. Matesky's and his arrival home, but verily if a man is to be held guilty of so serious a crime as murder because he is unable to account for a few hours of his time is to place a discount on justice. You have a serious responsibility, gentlemen, and I have no doubt that you will bear it in mind. With the arguments I have placed before you I am sure you will come to the conclusion that the prisoner is, not guilty."

The Judge's summing up was very brief and terse. He told the jury their responsibilities and made it clear to them that if they had any reasonable doubt in their minds they were bound to give the prisoner the benefit of the doubt. In a few words he pointed out the weakness of the defence, which, he characterised more as sentimental than logical, and which he said entirely failed to account for the accused's revolver in the room where the murder was committed. He paid a tribute to the prosecuting counsel for the clearness and fairness with which he had conducted the case, and impressed upon the jury that, having regard to the law, they had either to find the prisoner guilty of murder, as there was no question of grave and sudden provocation, or find him not guilty of the offence, if they regarded the evidence as insufficient to bring in a verdict of guilty.

Without retiring to consider their verdict, the foreman informed his Lordship that they were unanimously of opinion that the accused was guilty of murder.

His Lordship put on his black cap. "Malcolm Wensley," he said, "you are found guilty of the murder of William Crow. I sentence you to be hanged by the neck until you are dead, and may God have mercy on your soul."

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### Revelation.

Early next morning Dr. Matesky went to see Malcolm at the prison. He was astonished to find Malcolm perfectly cool and apparently quite resigned to his fate. Malcolm opened the conversation by telling the Doctor that he desired to settle his wordly affairs.

"I have already seen about that, Wensley," the Doctor explained. "I am advised that as your only assets are your Life Insurance Policies, the best course for you to follow is to endorse them over to me as for valuable consideration, leaving it to me to arrange to discharge, in the first instance, your just dues and then to dispose of the remainder in whatever way you direct."

"I thank you very much for this proposal, Doctor. I shall be very glad to do as you suggest. I have very little to say as regards the disposal of the residue. Please pay half to my wife and the other half to Mrs. Crow, but please, Doctor, promise me that you will fully reimburse yourself for all the expenses you have incurred on my account."

The Doctor made no reply but Malcolm felt that his wishes would not be disregarded.

"I shall call again to-morrow, Wensley," said the Doctor, "and shall bring the policies

with me duly prepared for your signature. Keep cheerful unto the last. We are yet doing all we can to trace the murderer and who knows we may yet succeed. How unjust it is that you should be condemned to suffer so ignominious a death for no other reason than that you uttered an idle threat ; but for that threat the case against you would have failed. Truly the tongue is a dangerous weapon."

Malcolm's affairs were settled the next day. Gwendolyn came to see him on the fifth morning but she broke down so completely, immediately she entered the cell, that she had to be removed. One other visitor called to see Malcolm. It was the Manager of the Opera House. "Wensley," he said, "years ago I wronged you and have come to ask your pardon."

"It does not matter," Malcolm replied, "but I felt it very much when you sent me away to employ that European lad."

"Indeed, no, Wensley. The man you saw that day at the counter was one of the actors. Your services were terminated because a man by the name of Cochrane came and told me you were a habitual gambler. He showed me I. O. U. slips of one night running to nearly two hundred rupees. Only yesterday I found out that he was a fraud and I knew I had wronged you."

On the afternoon of the sixth day a strange event took place. It had just struck two

when Dr. Matesky, the Chief Warder of the Prison and Inspector Cachart entered Malcolm's cell. "You must come with us Wensley," said Doctor Matesky, "Your wife is seriously ill. Indeed, I have no right to keep it from you, she is at the point of death. She has begged permission to see you and I have, after considerable difficulty, been able to obtain special sanction to your going out under escort for an hour. Come, follow us, there is no time to be lost."

They were conveyed to the house in the prison van. As they entered the room where Martha lay seated on a couch, all present stood up. Malcolm looked around him and saw that there were about twelve persons in all and that at one end of the room Gwendolyn and her mother stood together. He could not bear to face them so he turned quickly and looked at Martha. He was directly opposite her and only removed from her by a few feet. Clad in his prison garments he appeared out of place in this gathering, but he tried to be at ease.

Martha began to speak ; she was very weak and could only utter her words one by one, but she spoke quite distinctly.

"Malcolm" she began "I am about to die, Dr. Matesky told me that I won't live to see the morning. Dr. Burnham, who was called in half an hour ago, says practically the same. I have sent for you, Malcolm,

because I have much to say to you. If you had not been permitted to come I should have gone to the prison to see you. I could never die without seeing you Malcolm and telling you all there is to be told. Malcolm our lives have been a sad failure. As I look back upon all these years I can hardly count three or four months of consecutive happiness in our lives. I recognise now, Malcolm, that you are not to be blamed and when you have heard my story I hope you will think better of me. It was not all my fault, Malcolm, circumstances were against me. Shortly after our marriage I went away to Kodaikanal. You don't know exactly why I went away Malcolm. A few days before our marriage Miss Quail, the Head Mistress of the school where I was educated, told me she was very sorry I was going to marry you. She said, it was a duty I owed to my community and to the generation yet unborn, to marry so as to improve the breed. Oh, she was so clever Malcolm and she could talk so forcibly. She persuaded me to promise that I would never have any children. You see Malcolm she told me that a coloured child suffered very much. That he would be ridiculed at school and scoffed at at business. That he would never get on. Either he would be passed over whenever promotions took place or if ever reductions of establishments had to be made he would be the first to be sent away. She referred to your father's as a case in point. She said, she knew your father when he was

well off, and she also knew, most definitely, that he was punished for no other reason than because he was coloured. She told me I must be prepared to get up any morning and hear that you had lost your appointment and what, she said, will be your position if you have five or six children on your hands. Malcolm, I knew enough of you not to be afraid for you, but I could not bear the thought of children of mine being ill-treated or having to suffer unjustly in the world, and that is why I gave her my promise not to have any children and ran away to Kodaikanal. I had not been a day away from you when I realised what a mistake I had made. I then realised what a difference it was to live in the same house with you and that colour was only skin deep. If I had children, even if they were dark, I knew that if they had your character and manners they must get on. Nothing would stop them. Opposition and adversity would only tend to bring out the best in them. My fears had all vanished. I longed for you Malcolm. I longed to be your wife in reality as well as in name. I came back determined to meet your wishes in every way but you were a changed man, Malcolm. In the interval you had removed yourself to a different room and you never hugged and kissed me as you were wont to do formerly. You were kind, courteous and considerate and you met every wish I expressed but all this was not what I wanted Malcolm. I wanted you. I was on the



point of confessing to you that my views had changed but I really could not Malcolm. It was more than any woman could do. Gradually we drifted more and more apart and I began to fear that we would never be what I wished to one another. This at times made me bitter against you, Malcolm, but I could never really be bitter against you because I loved you so much. I was strangely attracted to you. You were the very emblem of perfect manhood to me. Every other man appeared a small creature in front of you. And what I loved and admired most in you was the way you controlled your temper, and believe me, Malcolm, I loved you even more on the morning when in cold deliberation you punished me for offending, by striking you for the fourth time. I love you Malcolm. I have always loved you. I could never have loved any other man. I wanted you but you removed yourself from me. I should have been quite a different wife Malcolm if you took me to yourself but you would not. I would have been quite a different woman if I had children, Malcolm. Indeed if I had only one child." And she threw her arms out as she spoke. "Oh how I longed and longed to have one. That would have brought out all the good and tenderness there was in me. The bitterness which I at times felt towards you I soon transferred to anyone who loved you or cared for you or whom you loved or cared for. I only permitted one exception; of that I shall speak later. I hated your family,

every one of them, for no other reason than because you loved them. Whenever you spoke to anyone of them, and it has always been your habit to speak in a low, soft and endearing tone, I felt that I could stab them to death in an instant. And yet I knew that if you took me to you as I wished, everything would be different. I hated your friends, Malcolm, and I confess that I wilfully quarrelled with them to end your friendship: There was no one I disliked more than Mrs. Wittenbaker because I knew that you admired her. I thought that if you had no friends and if you were severed from your family you would naturally turn to me. This is no time to do ought but speak the truth, Malcolm, and it is the truth when I tell you that I did all this for no other reason than because I loved you with my whole being and I wanted you. I knew you loved me, Malcolm, until that fateful day when you told me that you had changed and that you would never forgive me for my conduct in striking you, but you did not love me in the way you should have Malcolm. But that is all passed Malcolm. We have suffered principally because we did not understand one another. Since my marriage it has been often urged that I have acted in such and such a manner because I had a violent temper, but it was not temper at all, Malcolm. What I did I did deliberately and in pursuance of a definite plan. I aimed for a certain end and I believed that the end justified the means. If we had been reconciled your

relatives and friends would have found a true friend in me. I should have gone to them one by one and made peace with them, but it was not to be so. I was not a wicked sort, Malcolm, please believe this of me. I have nothing but praise and admiration for you. You bore patiently with me. As I look back I am convinced that no other man would have borne with me for more than a year or two and yet if you did assert your authority the first time I behaved in a wrong manner it might have been different for both of us. I love you Malcolm, and if I was a girl again, with all the knowledge of what has occurred in our married life, I should marry you and none other but you. Malcolm, dear, even for your firmness in not forgiving me these last two and half years I admire and respect you. I have brought you here, Malcolm, to ask your forgiveness before I die, but there is time for that yet. There are other matters of importance of which I must first speak."

"First, Malcolm, I have a confession to make. Years ago in my despair because you kept away from me I was tempted to do a thing I would never have otherwise done. I was sitting out in the verandah one morning when a fortune teller came up to me and said, Memsahib, I know you are unhappy and I am able to remove the cause and make you very happy, I asked him if he could tell me what my unhappiness was. He replied, your love for the master is not returned and what is

more in a short time, if he does not love you, he will love some one else. It is the only thing that will cure him of his illness, his only means of escaping death. I believed in the man at once and told him I would pay him anything if he could change you. I gave him ten rupees and I promised him a hundred when I got a child. He gave me some powders and told me to give them to you in your tea. He said that they would work wonders and that everything would turn out as I wished and he promised to come after a year and claim his hundred rupees. But I never saw him again, Malcolm. This and the fact that the other man also told you that there was only one means of escape for you are the reasons why I was so incensed against the other fortune teller who called on that Christmas day. Believing what these fortune tellers predicted must come to pass I deliberately brought Gwendolyn Carpenter and threw her in your way. I was not afraid of your falling in love with her. I knew you were a good man and that Gwendolyn was the very soul of honour. I was afraid of Mrs. Wittenbaker. When you told me what that professor told you I would not allow you to go to that man in Chingrihatta, because I immediately made up my mind to go to him myself. I tried often but failed to see him, but two years later I obtained an interview, paid him the hundred rupees and told him everything of both the men. I know them very well, he said. They are

two brothers. They are proper rogues. It is by such clever arrangements they knock money out of people. Don't believe any of these people. They are frauds. That trick of the scorpion is only a sleight of hand trick which my son of twelve years can perform just now if you wish. The white medicine he gave you was a simple powder to excite and destroy the nerves, about showing you the photograph. that was only a threat. There is only one true fortune teller in the world, he said, and that man is me. I knew he was right about one thing and that was that these two men were brothers. In fact when I first saw the man who called on Christmas day I thought he was the man who had given me the powders but their voices were different and the younger of them had a cut on his cheek which the other hadn't. Of course they are all frauds, Malcolm, But this was all too late, Malcolm, you had already fallen in love with Gwendolyn."

"Malcolm, with all your cleverness you are a poor fellow at deception. I was never deceived in your relations with Gwendolyn. I knew all. I knew exactly when you two became lovers because I brought you together and was watching, and yet I stood by and watched. I knew you both were good and that there was no real danger but here again I made a mistake but only partly so and that part to my cost. I imagined that Gwendolyn would soon feel remorse at her behaviour, especially if I treated her with exceptional kindness.

That is why I so often sent her valuable presents and did all I could to make her holidays happy. I sacrificed much for her. I was playing a deep game, but the prize was worth it. I told myself that if Gwendolyn broke with you and more especially if she did so to marry another, you would turn in grief to me. This also accounts for my aversion to her marrying your brother. If she did that, I feared that you would still be on intimate terms with her. Malcolm you used to be very careless with the letters she wrote to you. You carried them about with you in your pockets, and when you were asleep at nights I read every one of them. The letters told me all that I wanted to know. I was convinced that there was nothing seriously wrong. Gwendolyn would always refer to her love for you as a pure love. And Malcolm, I know what awful sufferings you used to undergo at times because of your love for Gwendolyn. So many young men used to call over continually and fence at love with her and of course she had to pretend to be free and you had to sit quietly and look on. At times also she would pretend to encourage them, probably in order to mislead me but much to your discomfort it had the effect of making her admirers more ardent. I used to watch you Malcolm and I know how you suffered. I knew the very anguish of your soul, why your very blood must have been running chill. Oh Malcolm I pitied you because I had the experience of such sufferings myself when at

times I saw your eyes brighten up with love for Gwendolyn."

"When Gwendolyn became engaged to William Crow I felt that the dream of my life would soon be realised. You were in a sad state of mind at the time and I did everything in my power to please and tempt you, but, you were unchangeable. Oh my God what a blow it was to me. Malcolm in that respect you were cold—cold as a stone—What a difference, Malcolm, from the passionate man you were before I married you. Then and then only I recognised that it was utterly hopeless. I had completely misunderstood your nature and your feelings. There was nothing more for me to live for and much to my relief of mind I felt worse and worse in health every day. I cared for only one thing: I looked forward to only one thing: That one thing was death. In the attitude you adopted towards Gwen after her marriage I realised more than ever what a good man you were, because I knew with the unfailing instinct of a woman in such matters that you still loved her. You carried a miniature photograph of hers, and in your purse you had a letter of hers in which she promised to be yours always and in which she said that no death would be bad enough for her if she ever failed you. Oh yes, Malcolm, this is all true. I watched you but you were unsuspecting, you believed your secret was quite safe."

"When Gwendolyn came to see you on the

terrible day when William was killed, the ayah saw her and came and told me that she had called and had gone into your study. I felt at once that something unusual had happened. Otherwise Gwendolyn would never have come to see you. I placed a chair alongside the door and applied my ear to the key hole. I heard every word that was exchanged between you. And Malcolm, believe me, my dear, I loved you all the more for all I heard. And then for the first time in my life I understood what hatred really was. I never really hated your relatives and friends. I hated William Crow. I hated him with a hatred akin to murder. Even as I realized this I recognised that hatred was impossible in your nature. You had threatened to kill William. I felt that you would do so, not because you hated him, but because you loved Gwendolyn and could not bear to see her suffer, and here the voice of conscience whispered to me, you have spoilt his life, this is your opportunity to show your love for him. Your life is quickly passing away, what matter it if it is ended to-morrow. It has been ordained, many years ago, that William Crow, the tyrant, the deceiver and the bully shall die for his misdeeds by the hand of man. You will not be committing too grave a sin by removing him yourself. On the contrary you will do a good and righteous deed by preventing your husband from staining his hands with the blood of such a despicable cur. Act at once."



“I went back to my room and lay on my bed. I heard Gwendolyn go out and later on you came into my room and told me you would not be out long. I could see at once that you had no intention of committing murder, but I had made many mistakes in the past and I was not going to make another. I dressed myself hurriedly, took out your revolver from your dressing almirah, I had to force the lock to do so, and I drove in a taxi and alighted near William’s place. I was surprised, Malcolm, at the strength I had in me. I reached the house and climbed the stairs. The whole place was in darkness except one room in which a light was burning. I made for it. I heard William’s voice but I was so excited that it did not occur to me that he must be talking to some one. I steadied myself, opened the door and pointed the pistol at him.”

“Stop Martha, stop Martha,” cried Malcolm. “This is an infamous lie which you have invented in the hope of setting me free. You know you are about to die and you wish to save me. I will not allow it. You shall not die with dishonour and shame attaching to you. I thought of dying with my secret and I hoped that by denying having committed the offence you, Gwendolyn, and my friends at least would have thought well of me, but this sacrifice which you are attempting to make compels me to speak the truth. The Judge

and Jury were right. It was I who murdered William Crow."

There was a sharp shriek and turning round Malcolm saw that Gwendolyn had thrown herself into her mother's arms and was sobbing bitterly.

"Take me away from here Inspector Cachart," Malcolm demanded, "I, a criminal, justly condemned to be hanged have no right to be among these good people."

But Doctor Matesky held up a warning hand. "Be quiet all of you," he commanded in a firm but gentle voice. "It is not right to interrupt this lady. Let us hear all she has to say," and he advanced and poured a liquid stimulant down Martha's throat.

"Malcolm you know that you are not speaking the truth. Let me get back again to what I was saying. I pointed the revolver to William, but even as I did so the white hand, the hand of a lady, who had hid herself behind the curtains, pushed mine down and then with her other hand she fired at him and he fell." *That is what you deserve for treating me as you did after you married me,* she cried."

Malcolm tried to speak but he was choked. He wanted again to assert that he was the murderer. Who can describe his feelings at the time. Whatever was Martha going to say next. Indeed there was nothing more for her to say. Gwendolyn was the murderess, Gwendolyn

his love. "Oh my Gwendolyn, my Gwendolyn," he said to himself "you did all this in order to save me but I shall die for you dear. I shall get Dr. Matesky to certify that Martha had lost her reason before her death."

His heart within him was palpitating. A strange cold feeling passed through the whole of his body. There was a lump in his throat. After a time he was able to control himself to be able to speak: "Dr. Matesky," he stammered.

"Keep quiet, Wensley, hear what your wife has to say," sharply retorted the Doctor.

"Malcolm," continued Martha, "when I heard that you were arrested I wanted to inform the authorities of all I knew. Ah, but I must tell you Malcolm when I heard the woman speak I turned and looked at her. I expected to see Gwendolyn, but it was not her, it was a foreigner: Her face frightened me and I dropped my revolver and fled; but about reporting to the authorities I feared that as I was unable to identify the woman who had shot William, my story would not have been believed and that I would have been placed in the Dock instead of you. I knew that you could bear humiliation better than I could, but I also knew that God would not allow the innocent to suffer and I hoped that you would soon be declared not guilty, and discharged without a stain on your character. Malcolm, it is now six days since you were

convicted and sentenced but the news was kept from me. I was not allowed to see a paper and everyone told me that the case was still proceeding and what is of greater consequence, I was given hopes of your acquittal. I prayed and prayed that the real murderer would be found and, if as in answer to my prayer, I awoke one evening two days ago, from a short sleep into which I had fallen, to find a lady sitting near my bed. Malcolm it was *she*. I was about to scream and denounce her as the murderess but she gently restrained me. She had read my thoughts. Don't do that dear, you will only spoil your own case. If you call your servants I shall deny everything. I am come to place in your hands the means to set your husband free. Keep these papers, she said, they contain a full confession."

"She told me her name was Eliza. She wouldn't tell me her surname or anything more except that she was a Russian. My confession, she said, will tell you all. If you wish to do me a good turn keep silent for two days by which time I shall disappear. She did not wait for my reply. She left as mysteriously as she had come in."

"Malcolm, you will find the papers she left under my pillow. And now Malcolm, I want your forgiveness. I cannot die without it. Tell me that you love me. Even just a little."

Malcolm threw himself on his knees by the

side of her couch. "Oh Martha, Martha," he cried, "I forgave you long, long ago. The very day you struck me, only I did not tell you. I love you and have always loved you. Time after time I have told Gwendolyn so. But it is not for you to ask forgiveness of me Martha, I have to seek forgiveness of you. To think that all these years I misunderstood and misjudged you. I thought you cold and bitter but it was I who was cold. I and I only am responsible for all the unhappiness in our lives. I should have broken down the cruel pride in me and approached you. Martha, in the ignorance of my heart and the unselfishness of my nature I thought you cold and selfish, but, when I now see that you knew all about me and Gwendolyn and never said a word, I realize that you are the very acme of unselfishness. Can you ever forgive me Martha? How I wish that I was dying instead of you. You deserve to live but I, guilty of pride, and selfishness which is humanity's paramount sin, and disgraced and degraded for having spoilt two good and beautiful lives, yours and Gwendolyn's, am only fit to be trodden down by my fellow men. Say that you forgive me and then destroy that packet which Eliza has given you and let me die also for I am not fit to live."

She beckoned him to her and drew his head gently on to her breast. "No Malcolm," she said, "you are quite wrong. We are both not responsible. Circumstances were against us.

We misunderstood one another. You have got to live and you must promise me that you will marry Gwendolyn and make her life happy. Poor girl, I know how much she has suffered. And then we shall all soon meet again Malcolm in a place where, at least, there shall be no misunderstandings."

"Martha, Martha," he cried, "it is impossible. You shan't die. God is not cruel. He will spare you and we will live our lives over again. Oh, how different it will be."

He raised his head and their lips met.

The scene was too sacred for mortal eyes. Every one present hung their heads, and a few minutes passed during which the silence was so intense that it could be felt, and then Inspector Cachart touching Malcolm on the shoulder said, "The time is already passed Mr. Wensley, let us be going."

Malcolm stood up and looked around him. He saw that all, with the exception of Gwendolyn, were standing erect looking down on the floor, and that many of them had their handkerchiefs to their eyes. Gwendolyn was kneeling at her mother's feet with her head buried in her mother's lap and her shapely arms entwined round her mother's waist.

Malcolm was led out as he was brought in. As he entered the Van, Mrs. Carpenter came running after them. She approached Malcolm and in a voice full of sorrow and agony said. *She has gone Malcolm. It is all over.*

## CHAPTER XX.

### **The Call of Blood.**

Before Malcolm went to sleep that night he knelt down as usual to pray. He wanted to ask God to forgive him for all the selfishness of his behaviour towards Martha, for all the unhappiness of their married life for which he was solely responsible; and to thank God for having opened their eyes to the truth before it was too late. But though he remained on his knees for fully an hour no such words would come to his lips. When in despair he was about to rise to his feet the words of a hymn which he had often heard Martha sing were ringing in his ears. He bowed his face to the ground and in this position repeated.

No earthly father loves like Thee :  
No mother e'er so mild  
Bears and forebears, as Thou hast done  
With me thy sinful child.

My God how wonderful Thou art !  
What rapture will it be,  
Prostrate before Thy Throne to lie,  
And gaze, and gaze on Thee.

Gwendolyn and Mrs Carpenter sat up the whole night in the death chamber. Towards morning Mrs. Carpenter called Gwendolyn to her and said. "Gwendolyn, there is something I must tell you."

"What is it. Mother?"

"Malcolm is your brother."

"Oh, Mother. Then I am not your child mother," and she burst out weeping.

"It's a very sad story, dear, but you are Malcolm's half sister. His mother was divorced by his father, Mr. Wensley. She then married a gentleman by the name of Bull. When her second husband died and she was left penniless, the only way that seemed open to her to earn her living, was to go into a hospital to take her training as a nurse, but how was she to do this with a little baby in her arms? The case was mentioned to your father and he offered to adopt the child provided Mrs. Bull agreed never to claim it in the future. What was the poor woman to do? She agreed, and I know she agreed only because she thought more of her child than herself. Only I realised how much it cost her, as she kissed the child before handing it over to me, to agree to this condition. Gwendolyn that child was you. Only father and I knew about this; but there, don't cry darling, I've brought you up and I am every bit your mother and no mother has ever had a more loving and dutiful daughter that I have had in you. Don't darling. Don't cry."

But Gwendolyn was crying because she was thinking of Malcolm.

THE END.











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